

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

SENT TO D.C.

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1-3-11

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Brown, Roger Home and Studio
other names/site number Brown, Roger Study Collection

2. Location

street & number 1926 North Halsted Street ☐ not for publication
city or town Chicago ☐ vicinity
state Illinois code IL county Cook code 031 zip code 60614

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

☐ national ☒ statewide ☐ local

Cherie E. Haas Jan. 3, 2011
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

☐ entered in the National Register ☐ determined eligible for the National Register
☐ determined not eligible for the National Register ☐ removed from the National Register
☐ other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	buildings
1		sites
		structures
		objects
3	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC / Single Dwelling

COMMERCE AND TRADE / Professional Studio

COMMERCE AND TRADE / Storefront

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION AND CULTURE / Museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Late Victorian / Italianate

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Limestone

walls: Brick

Cast Iron

Smooth finish modified bituminous

roof: membrane, aluminum silver coat

other: Limestone

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

1926 N. Halsted Street is located on the north side of Chicago, Illinois, in the Lincoln Park community area. Its immediate surroundings are mixed residential and commercial, with some historic buildings and a great deal of new construction. However, both of the property's immediate neighbors are low-rise residential. Contributing buildings on the property include the main two-story building that fronts onto Halsted Street and a frame garage erected and detailed by Brown. The backyard, landscaped by artist Roger Brown, is a contributing site. The main building is rectangular in plan and was built in 1888. It has a storefront on the ground floor with living spaces on the second floor. It is Italianate in style with red brick facades and limestone details and foundation, and retains its original cast-iron storefront. The roof is made of layers of fiberboard insulation, bitumen, and an aluminum silver coat. The garage is also rectangular and of a vernacular style. It has a hipped asphalt roof, cedar siding, and copper gutters and downspouts. Brown lived and worked on the property from 1974 until just before his death in 1997. With his partner, architect George Veronda, he extensively renovated the interior of the building, and their design remains intact. The first floor studio and workshop are where Brown created many of his most important artworks, while he and Veronda lived in the second floor apartment with Brown's extensive and diverse collection of artwork. The entire property exhibits exceptional integrity inside and out. The main building, the garage and backyard have been maintained as a house museum dedicated to the study of Brown and his artwork. Brown and Veronda's interior design and their belongings have been maintained precisely as Brown left them. The only changes to the property are confined to the interior of the first floor of the main building when it was used as an art gallery by Intuit: The Center for Outsider and Intuitive Art immediately after Brown moved out. Intuit's minor alterations were limited to the first floor studio and allowed the space to be used as a public art gallery. Alterations include adding a closet, removing a sink and doorways and changing light fixtures.

Narrative Description

Introduction

Roger Brown moved into the building at 1926 N. Halsted Street in 1974 and stayed there until 1995, leaving just before his death in 1997. It was where he lived and worked for most of his mature career, and he created a large number of his most important artworks in his studio on the building's first floor. Brown also extensively renovated the property with his partner, architect George Veronda, who died in 1984. Brown preserved historic features on the exterior and further updated the already altered interior to accommodate his artistic practice. The building's present appearance bears the unmistakable mark of Brown's hand, and possesses strong integrity relating to his tenure in the property. Brown's alma mater, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC), now owns the building and its contents and has meticulously preserved the property as a house museum, study collection, and archive.¹

Location & Context

1926 N. Halsted is located on the north side of Chicago, Illinois, in the Lincoln Park community area. It is about three miles north and about one mile west of downtown. It is on the west side of Halsted Street, one half block south of Armitage Avenue. The property consists of the main two-story building that fronts onto Halsted Street, as well as a backyard landscaped by Brown, and a frame garage erected and detailed by Brown.

The property is within the boundaries of the National Register of Historic Places Sheffield Historic District, which was established in 1975 and expanded in 1985, although it is not listed as a contributing structure in that district, nor in its extension. The Sheffield area is a late-nineteenth-century commercial and residential neighborhood that grew around the historic commercial corridors of Halsted Street and Armitage Avenue beginning in the mid-nineteenth century. The property also lies just beyond the southwestern boundary of the City of Chicago Armitage-Halsted Historic District, which

¹ Details about the history of 1926 N. Halsted Street in this description were compiled with the assistance of the Roger Brown Study Collection (RBSC) archives and curator Lisa Stone.

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was designated in 2003. That district is defined as one of Chicago's best remaining neighborhoods of commercial and mixed-use architecture from the period between 1870 and 1930.

The intersection of Halsted Street and Armitage Avenue remains an important commercial center, and the block surrounding 1926 N. Halsted Street is densely populated with residences and businesses in a mixture of historic and newly constructed buildings. Halsted Street is a major thoroughfare, so businesses and mixed-use buildings are still vital. The building at 1926 N. Halsted Street is an important part of the visual and functional fabric of the block. In its early history it was one of many two-story buildings in the area with a storefront on the ground level and apartments above. Brown maintained its mixed-use character, working out of his studio on the ground level and living above. Now its use as a house museum and study center owned by the School of the Art Institute of Chicago contributes to the cultural life of this otherwise heavily commercial and residential neighborhood.

In the years since Brown moved into 1926 N. Halsted, the surrounding neighborhood has changed dramatically. It is now a gentrified, established community, and the result has been the replacement of some of its original building stock with new development. Well-preserved late-nineteenth-century cast-iron storefronts, like the one at 1926 N. Halsted, were once a common sight in Lincoln Park, but they are now increasingly rare amidst the contemporary four-story townhouses and sprawling retail developments.

To the north of the property, on the west side of Halsted Street, are seven residences, a bar, three restaurants, a meat market, and a bank. To the south, on the same side of the street, are a block of residential buildings, a storefront, and a small park in the courtyard of a residential complex. On the east side of Halsted Street are a bar, a hair salon, three restaurants, a fitness emporium, a bank, and eight residential buildings, two of which are newly constructed. Immediately across the street from 1926 N. Halsted are an art gallery and three empty lots currently being used as a staging area for the construction of a massive single-family home that faces Burling Street and occupies seven city lots. Commercial development is planned for the three lots on Halsted Street. The presence of this upscale home in the neighborhood is indicative of the area's current social and economic character.

The immediate neighbors of 1926 N. Halsted Street are both multi-family residential and, like most of the apartment buildings in the area, they are two or three stories with a basement. The building to the south is three stories with a similar red brick and limestone facade as that on Brown's building. That property retains its pressed metal cornice. The neighbor to the north is a Second Empire style home now divided into apartments. It is set about ten feet back from the street with a raised entrance and small entry porch. It has a brick facade on the basement and first floor, wooden clapboards on the second story, and a fish-scale mansard roof.

Alley access to 1926 N. Halsted Street is to the west, through the garage in the backyard. The neighbors on the west side of the alley are low-rise residential buildings, also with garages on the alley.

Exterior Description

1926 N. Halsted is an east-facing two-story Italianate style storefront situated directly at the sidewalk. Its facade is primarily red face brick set in a running bond. Its ground floor features a blue painted cast-iron storefront that spans three of the four bays on this level.² The middle of these three bays contains the main entry, which is reached by two concrete steps over a limestone foundation, topped by a cast-iron threshold and full-width sill plate. The recessed entry is two simply carved wooden doors with large windows. Above the doors is a large transom window. On either side of the entry are simple cast-iron columns with unusual Egyptian-style capitals. The large storefront windows flanking these columns are divided horizontally into two windows of uneven size. Markings on the cast-iron muntin indicate that the top windows were at one point divided in half by a vertical cast-iron mullion. The window sashes and paneled bulkheads below each window are made of wood. These non-original bulkheads were in poor condition and were replaced during the 2006 restoration of the storefront. A secondary recessed entrance that leads to a stairway to the second story occupies the northernmost bay of the ground floor. This entry's single wooden door is also reached by two concrete steps topped by a cast-iron threshold, but it is not recessed as far as the main entry. It is also a simply carved wooden door, but it has no window. Above the door is a similar transom window. The door is flanked by brick pilasters with limestone bases, center details, and plain capitals with moldings bisecting the capitals. The southernmost corner of the ground floor has a matching brick pilaster.

² The storefront was painted a darker shade of blue in 1999, but during the 2006 restoration microscopic paint analysis revealed that Brown himself used a lighter blue, so the storefront was re-painted with this color, reflecting his choice.

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A full-width cast-iron lintel that is part of the storefront system divides the ground floor from the second story. The second story is divided into three bays, with a one-over-one double-hung window in each bay. The southern and middle bays project slightly from the main building plane and are further defined visually by four rows of corbelled brickwork, which step out just above the cast-iron lintel. The northern bay is flush to the façade plane, with a matching double-hung window. A continuous limestone stringcourse is below the windows, and the northern window has a slightly projecting sill in line with the stringcourse. A similar stringcourse joins the three rectangular limestone lintels, each with a simple floral carving in the center.

When 1926 N. Halsted Street was built, the parapet was almost certainly ornamented with a decorative cast-metal cornice. When Brown bought the building, the cornice area was patched with a coat of deteriorated concrete. Brown made plans for a replacement cornice in 1994, to be fabricated and installed 1995, but this project was unrealized. In 2003, the deteriorated mortar patch was replaced with red face brick that is distinguished in texture and color from the original brick.

The building to the north, a two-story residential building, is set back from the sidewalk, revealing about ten feet of 1926 N. Halsted Street's north elevation. This elevation is common brick, and shows the remnants of a painted advertisement for *The Daily News* that is twenty-feet tall and nine-and-a-half-feet wide with yellow block letters. It reads "ALL THE NEWS" in smaller letters at the top, and below in four-and-a-half-foot tall letters, "THE DAILY NEWS," with each word on its own line. The word NEWS is five-feet, six-and-a-half inches above ground level. There are traces of light blue paint surrounding them. According to RBSC archives, the advertisement pre-dated Brown's purchase of the building in 1974, and was one of its features that attracted the artist to the building because of his interest in advertising graphics and vernacular art. The rest of the north facade is unpainted common brick. On the first floor there are four windows, grouped in the center of the facade. The windows have double rowlock segmental brick arches above and limestone sills below, with the exception of the westernmost window into the archive closet, which is topped by a single flat arch of header bricks. From east to west, they open onto the utility closet, the bathroom, and two windows into the archive closet, the eastern of which has been filled with brick. All of the windows are wood one-over-one light double-hung, with the exception of the extant archive closet window, which is two-over-two light double hung. The window in the utility closet is covered with a metal mesh screen. On the second floor there are six windows, one of which is filled with bricks. The rest are aluminum one-over-one light double hung windows. From east to west, they open onto the north stairway, the guest bedroom, two in the bathroom, and two in the bedroom. The eastern window in the bedroom is filled with bricks, and the eastern bathroom window is covered from the inside.

There is a concrete paved gangway three-feet wide along the building's southern elevation. This elevation is also common brick, and its windows also have double rowlock segmental arches above and limestone sills below. On the eastern end of the first floor there are two high, small bricked-in window openings that originally admitted light into the main storefront space. Further west, in the center of the elevation, are double wooden doors with a transom window that open onto the central staircase, which divides the open storefront space that was Brown's studio at the front of the building from the workshop and storage spaces in the rear. These doors now provide handicapped access to the building, and are reached by a small ramp constructed out of two-by-six-inch boards. To the west of this entrance is a pair of windows into the rear workshop room. These windows are covered with undersized double-hung storm windows with wooden window heads filling in the space between the storms and the brick arches. The windows are wooden and have one-light-over-two-light sash. On the second story of the south facade there are five similar windows. The two eastern windows look into the western half of the main living room, the center window looks onto the landing at the top of the center staircase, and the western two windows look into the informal living room or den.

The building's rear or west facade has a two-level wooden deck, presumably built around the time of Brown's purchase of the building which replaced an historic porch. The first floor of the deck is nearly at ground level, with a wooden straight-run stairway on its north end that leads to the deck's second story. The solid balustrade on the second story is made of vertical two-by-six-inch boards, similar to those used on the wooden gate to the gangway on the south side of the building, which was added by Brown. The balustrade is topped by a one-foot, six-inch tall wooden lattice, and both the lattice and the balustrade are divided in half by a four-by-four-inch wooden center post. The roof of the second-story deck appears to pre-date the rest of the wooden structure, and is presumably remaining from the historic porch structure. It has four cross beams with two by six-inch planks laid across them and is supported by eight-inch square corner posts that go to the ground and support the deck. On the southern end of the roof there is a hatch providing access to the roof of the building.

The entire rear facade of the building is white-painted brick. Each story has a central door with an eight-light window that is topped by a large transom window – on the first story this transom is divided vertically into two lights. The doors are each flanked by one-over-one light double-hung windows with four-light storm windows. All of the storm windows, except

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the south window on the first floor, appear to be original, and are arched at the top to fit the rowlock brick segmented arched openings, although a wood window head infills the space between the shorter storm sash and the brick arch.

Landscaping Description

For most of Brown's time at 1926 N. Halsted Street, the backyard was a weedy, overgrown space. Toward the end of his life, Brown undertook a major renovation process that resulted in a deliberate, cohesive setting that completed Brown's evolving architectural vision for the entire property. This vision is still extant. In Brown's last sketchbook, which includes sketches from 1993 to 1997, is a sketch for a formal garden setting that included architectural, sculptural, and plant elements. (Image 1)

The garden was completed and has been preserved as Brown sketched and established it. He first paved the entire backyard area with a circular composition of trapezoidal concrete pavers, which radiate around the circular cast-iron catch basin cover on the east side of the yard, in an arrangement that is both formal and links to the vernacular functionality of the site. In the two east corners of the yard, Brown planted juniper shrubs similar to those that appear in his paintings. The wooden fence on the north boundary of the yard is made of vertical two-by-six-inch boards like those on the south gangway gate. It is covered in grape vines and has more low-growing junipers at its base. The south fence was chain link during Brown's residence, but is owned by the building's neighbor and is now wood. The planting in the yard is minimal, but because of its resemblance to that found in his paintings and its symmetrical placement, it was clearly carefully considered.

At each corner of the yard Brown installed four cast-concrete planters of the sort probably found at common home and garden stores. On the south side of the yard, Brown created a sitting area with four wooden chairs and a table, all reproductions of traditional English garden furniture. They are flanked by two oversized cast concrete "classical" figures, to the east is Neptune and to the west is Persephone. The entire setting is created with mass-produced decorative items, but the symmetrical, sparse arrangement gives it an almost surreal feeling, not unlike the creepily ordered yards and gardens in Brown's paintings.

When Brown bought the property in 1974, there was likely still a brick garage at the west end of the backyard. At some point he replaced it with the extant frame garage. Permit research has yielded no information on the exact date of its construction, but it is estimated that it was built around 1994 when Brown did most of the work on the backyard. It is a simple structure, but carefully designed and built with high-quality materials, indicating the care with which Brown finished the garden. It has a hipped roof with asphalt shingles, copper gutters, operable wood windows, and cedar siding. The garage is still painted essentially as it was when Brown lived there, with cream siding and blue trim on all sides. The central entrance to the garage, on the east facade, is a single French wooden door with a fifteen-light window. The door itself is painted light blue, and is flanked by decorative shutters painted a darker blue, similar to the color he used on the cast-iron storefront on the main building. The miniature four-over-four light double-hung windows on either side of the door have matching decorative shutters. The traditional and symmetrical quaintness of the garage bears a striking similarity to the generic suburban houses that populate so many of Brown's paintings. The meticulously designed facade of the garage is a crucial part of the setting that Brown created in his backyard. Inside is a cement floor and exposed wooden ceiling structure. It was built for the purpose that it still serves: the storage of Brown's 1967 Ford Mustang, which could enter and exit through an electronic metal overhead garage door on the west or alley facade. The north and south facades have no fenestration, and are clad in cream-painted cedar siding.

Interior Description

The interior spaces of 1926 N. Halsted Street bear the mark of Brown's creativity and lifestyle just as clearly as the exterior. When Brown and Veronda purchased the property it was divided into a warren of small rooms that would have accommodated three apartments and a retail business. Brown transformed it into a modern and open single-family home and studio. There are few records of the building's former interior or exterior appearance. Brown made a rough sketch of the existing layout of the second floor indicating the approximate location of walls, stairs, doors, and windows, but this is the only evidence of its former floor plan. (Image 2) Because the building has been preserved as a house museum since soon after Brown's death in 1997, the interior spaces also display remarkable integrity to his time there. The only changes were made on the first floor in 1995, when Brown moved out and leased the building to Intuit, an organization he co-founded in 1991. He allowed Intuit to make minor modifications to transform his studio into a gallery. Throughout the building, visitors can see both the historic details maintained by Brown and Veronda and the modern custom designs that

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they installed. The interior is also rife with clues about Brown's habits in life and work, which provide important insights into his artistic process.

The main entrance to the building is through the central storefront doors on the east, Halsted Street, facade. The space reached through these doors is now used as a gallery, office, and orientation space. Originally it was the building's retail space, and Brown used it as his studio. The room has hardwood flooring, which may be original; the walls are simple drywall. Since Brown's purchase of the building, this space has been used to hold or display artwork so the space is kept simple and does not compete with the art. No original molding or baseboards remain in this space; Brown installed simple plain wooden baseboards. To maintain the studio as a very private place, Brown blocked the storefront doors with two large planters on the exterior. (Image 3) He also bricked over the two high windows in the south wall of this space and photographs show that he kept the aluminum mini-blinds drawn over the doors and storefront windows, sealing out all natural light. Brown preferred to paint by fluorescent light, and this quirk in his creative practice is borne out by the details of this room. However, track lighting has since been installed on the drywall ceiling. The blinds remain, but they are kept raised. In addition, movable drywall panels on wheels were installed in 1998 so that the School of the Art Institute could use the storefront windows as display space as needed.

At the rear of this main space, in the southwest corner, a narrow doorway leads to a vestibule for the south entry and the central "U"-plan staircase to the second floor. This doorway originally had a door and transom, but they were removed in the 1995 remodeling and it is now an unadorned opening. The exterior double doors that lead out to the gangway on the south side of the building are original wood with a transom above. When the building had both a retail space and an apartment on the first floor, this was probably the entrance to the first and second floor rear apartments. Unlike the main studio space at the front of the building, the original molding around the doors and windows and the original baseboards have been maintained in this vestibule and throughout most of the rest of the building.

The west room on the first floor, originally an apartment, was used by Brown as a workshop and for storage. It is now used as a workroom and archive. Since it used to be living space, this is where the first floor bathroom is located. The area now features four rooms: a large main room occupying the entire south half of the space, an archive closet (formerly Brown's painting storage closet) along the west two-thirds of the north side, and a small bathroom between the archive closet and the northeast corner utility closet. All of the openings in this room maintain their original moldings. Markings on the hardwood floor that run north-south show that there used to be a wall bisecting the main room, probably removed by Brown. On the south wall of the main space there are two original one-over-two light double-hung windows that look out onto the gangway and the building's neighbor to the south. On the west wall of the room there is a similar double-hung window and an exit to the backyard with a transom window above. On the north wall there are two doors to the archive closet, the easternmost of which is boarded up from the inside and non-functional. A third door was removed entirely, but its remaining molding shows its former location just to the east of the boarded door. Although the archive closet is a secondary space, it also possesses functional and physical integrity. The wooden racks that Brown built and installed in the archive closet to store his supplies and collections are now used by the RBSC to store the extensive collection of materials related to Brown's life and work. To the east of the storage closet is the bathroom with a toilet and pedestal sink. Another utility closet is entered through a door in the bathroom, and is now used for secondary storage.

The woodwork on the open staircase is probably original and features simply carved square oak newel posts, square oak balusters and contrasting flame maple treads and oak risers. When the building held three families living in its apartments, this would have been an enclosed stairway. When Brown and Veronda rehabilitated the building, they wanted to make as many open spaces and clear sight lines as possible in order to best appreciate Brown's art collection. Consequently, on the second floor they removed the north and south enclosing walls of the staircase so that from the top south landing they could see directly across the stairwell to a parallel north hallway. This hallway is separated from the stairway by a matching wooden railing. This is a singular and unusual feature, creating an open feeling in the center of the building, and views around and through areas of the second floor. If the stairway remained enclosed, it would have blocked both sight lines and air movement at the center of the apartment and would have detracted significantly from the open, modern feeling on the second floor.

The floor plan of the second floor was modified significantly, from many small rooms to a more flowing, open space designed specifically to accommodate an extensive collection of art. However, Brown and Veronda were careful to preserve a large measure of original features, primarily baseboards and door and window moldings, and to incorporate them into the 1970s modern character of their remodeling. The second floor is now preserved with Brown's personal art collection and its intact architectural envelope. The residential space is as Brown and Veronda lived in it.

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Immediately west of the stairway is the galley kitchen that Brown and Veronda designed and installed themselves. It is preserved intact, and is an excellent example of modern 1970s kitchen design, with simple white metal cabinets and a butcher-block countertop. It is now used primarily for storage by the RBSC, but some of Brown's kitchenware and non-perishable foodstuffs have been preserved in place. Two windows are set in the south wall opposite the kitchen.

Past the kitchen is an informal living room or den. On the west wall are two double-hung windows and the door onto the back deck with a transom window above. The north wall holds built-in shelving and a simple but dramatic fireplace designed by Veronda. It is placed off center to the east and is set out from the wall by two feet. It has a rectangular black metal firebox set in the white drywall-covered chimney, and closed with a black metal mesh curtain. To the right is a narrow gap between the chimney and the wall, and to the left are shelves built to accommodate the display of three-dimensional artwork. There is a black metal ledge a foot deep extending below these shelves and across the base of the fireplace that holds more pieces of Brown's art collection.

To the east of the central stairway is the large main living room. It is furnished to serve as a combination dining room and sitting room, but the entire space was designed primarily for the display of art, which lines the walls, sits on every surface, stands on much of the floor space and, in the case of a double-sided drawing that is framed so that its front and back are visible, even hangs from the ceiling. The space is long and relatively narrow, with two windows on the east wall and one window on the south wall. Brown kept white aluminum mini-blinds on these and all the windows on the second floor closed; the room is illuminated by rectangular track lighting that encircles the hanging drawing in the center of the ceiling. In the southeast corner, Veronda designed and installed a unit of two long, low shelves that run about ten feet along the wall between the corner and the furnace chimney, which protrudes ten inches from the wall. These narrow shelves are full of art and found objects, as they were intended to be. The two east windows are recessed in the wall about six inches, and are surrounded by original carved panels below and molding all around. The shallow alcoves created by their setback are also used for the display of art.

In the northeast corner of the room is a doorway to a narrow foyer and hallway that run parallel to the living room and lead to the north stairway that Brown used as the main entrance to the building. Veronda designed built-in shelves on the north wall and a coat closet in the west end of the foyer. The shelves are adjustable to accommodate varying shapes and sizes of objects, and the coat closet doors are carefully designed to lay perfectly flat when closed, with no visible hinges. The space is illuminated by light filtering through mini-blinds on the window at its east end and track and recessed lighting installed by Brown and Veronda. The stairway rises straight from the northeast street entrance to gently curve at the top. It features both a curved wood railing along the north wall and a wooden carved railing and newel post designed by Veronda at the top. The treads of the stairs are richly-grained yellow flame maple, while the treads are painted white, a design detail that Brown observed on his 1974 travels in Europe, undertaken soon after purchasing the building. Brown and Veronda likely built or altered the walls in the foyer, perhaps to provide more space for the display of art.

From the northwest corner of the main living room, along the north side of the building, is a short hallway that passes the open central staircase and accesses the guest room, center bathroom, and west bedroom. Brown and Veronda probably removed several walls in this central part of the apartment since it is in this area that the two originally separate apartments would have bordered one another. However, even when they demolished a wall, they apparently set aside any original molding and fixtures that remained and then re-installed them on some of the new walls and doors they created. The guest room is a small, simple room with a single north window. This room and the main bedroom have simplified molding around their windows, indicating that it is probably not original.

The bathroom was completely redone by Brown and Veronda, who did all of the work with their own hands, including tiling both floor and walls with one-inch-square white tiles. The shower is separated from the rest of the bathroom by a tiled wall, and features an elegant drop ceiling designed by Veronda. The rest of the bathroom fixtures are equally stylish, with an under-sink Formica cabinet that matches others throughout the building, and an oversized vanity mirror that lays nearly flush against the wall, concealing a medicine cabinet set into the wall.

Across the hall from the bathroom doorway are three Veronda-designed cabinets stacked from floor to ceiling, for storing clothing and linens. Like the rest of the Veronda-designed built-in storage in the house, they are minimal and modern with perfectly flat doors and concealed hinges.

At the west end of the short hallway is the master bedroom. It is a humble space with one north window and a large open closet designed with ample exposed shelving above for the display of art. When necessary, Brown concealed the closet with a freestanding folding screen. Along the south wall Brown installed a series of Techline bookshelves that he lay on

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their sides to provide more oversized shelving for art. The window opening is original, but Brown blocked it with a bookshelf.

The building has an unfinished basement that is used for storage. It has a cement floor and original wood beam supports and exposed wood joists in its ceiling, which is not full height. Its walls are primarily the limestone foundation of the building with the exception of the east elevation, which was made of brick. By 2006 this wall had deteriorated significantly, and it was rebuilt with concrete masonry units. Some brick remains in the northeast corner of the space. In the center of the south wall there is a former window opening, now filled with concrete. In the south corner of the west wall there is another window now covered with plywood, and a second smaller opening, possibly a coal chute, also covered with plywood. In addition to storage, the basement holds the electric meter, circuit breakers, water meter, sump pump, security system control panels, and carbon dioxide alarm system for the rest of the building.

Integrity

Since Roger Brown's death in 1997, 1926 N. Halsted Street has been owned continuously by SAIC, whose goal has been to preserve the building and collections in accordance with Brown's wishes for the property. Although Intuit made some modifications to the studio space in 1995 before Brown's death, the interior and exterior remain largely intact and reflect Brown's period of significance, 1974 through 1995. Intuit's alterations were limited to the first floor and include the creation of a closet in the northeast corner of the studio and the removal of a second entrance in the same corner of the room. That door now leads only to a set of stairs to the second-floor living space, whereas formerly there would have been another door immediately to the left of the exterior entrance that led to the studio space. This was the entrance that Brown used to access the studio space, since he kept the central entrance blocked with planters. (Image 3) Intuit also removed a sink in the northwest corner of the studio and a door and transom to the utility closet. A door and transom in the southwest corner of the studio, which lead to the center stairway, were also removed. Finally, Intuit removed the fluorescent light that Brown had installed in the studio and replaced it with track lighting.

The backyard garden and garage display exceptional integrity. The pavers that Brown installed, the plants he planted, and the urns and garden furniture he arranged are all intact just as he left them. The garage has been maintained as he built and used it – as storage for his car and other items. The exterior of the garage retains the original copper gutters and downspouts that Brown installed, as well as the original siding, doors, and windows.

Intuit's interim use of the space to display and study non-academic art furthered Brown's intention that 1926 N. Halsted would be used as an "Artists' Museum," and SAIC's operation of the building as the Roger Brown Study Collection is fully aligned with Brown's wishes that it be preserved as tangible evidence of his career and as an important aspect of the Chicago's art and cultural history. The property therefore has not only exceptional physical integrity, but functional integrity as well, as it continues to serve the educational, artistic, and inspirational purposes it served during Brown's life for him and countless other artists, students, and visitors.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☐ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☒ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☒ G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Art

Period of Significance

1974 - 1995

Significant Dates

1974 - 1995

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Brown, Roger

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Veronda, George (architect)

Siebold, Friedrich (builder)

Period of Significance (justification)

Artist Roger Brown lived and worked in the building at 1926 North Halsted Street from 1974, shortly after completing a master's degree in fine art at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC), until 1995, two years before his death. With his partner, architect George Veronda, Brown undertook significant renovations upon purchasing the property, turning the building from a storefront with three apartments into his studio and living space that also displayed his extensive art collection. He also developed and executed a landscape plan for the backyard that included a frame garage. During this time period, 1926 N. Halsted Street was Brown's primary home and workplace. It was not only where he lived for the majority of his career, but also the place where he conceived and fabricated most of his artwork. In 1995, Brown moved to

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a newly constructed residence in La Conchita, California. The following year he donated the contents of 1926 N. Halsted Street to SAIC and subsequently sold the building to the school.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

The Roger Brown Home and Studio at 1926 N. Halsted is a singular location for the study of twentieth century art in the State of Illinois. As such, it meets criteria consideration G of National Register eligibility for properties achieving significance within the last fifty years. The property is of exceptional significance because no other considerable artistic landmark exists in Chicago or elsewhere: it is the only remaining intact artist's studio, workshop and residence of the Imagist art movement of which Roger Brown was an important part. Imagism was a crucial part of America's mid-twentieth-century artistic landscape, and it is historically significant as the movement that established Chicago as a unique and independent art center. Brown also had an exceptionally close relationship with this property; it was not simply shelter for him. He executed a significant number of alterations to the property, so it clearly bears the mark of his inhabitation. The historic property and its location in the Lincoln Park neighborhood in Chicago also had a tremendous and well-documented effect on Brown's artwork, which frequently featured illustrations of Chicago's vernacular architecture.

Brown's significance in American art history has been established. His artwork is in the permanent collections of this country's most respected museums, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Chicago History Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C., and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, and outside the United States at institutions like the Museum of Modern Art in Vienna, Austria. (see Appendices 1 and 2 for complete list of collections and exhibitions including Brown's artwork.) The widespread inclusion of Brown's artwork in permanent museum collections is not only a testament to the past and current scholarly appreciation of his work, but also guarantees that Brown will continue to be studied by art historians and artists for generations to come. Even before his death, Brown was the subject of numerous solo shows around the world, including two major retrospective exhibitions, and this trend of exhibitions has continued since his death. Artists do not enjoy placement in such a caliber and range of museum collections and exhibitions without being considered historically important. Although fifty years is a relatively short time period in which to evaluate architectural significance, it has been more than enough time to establish Brown's art historical significance. Since this property is being nominated for its connection with Brown and Imagism, which were important aspects of Illinois's and America's art history, and not for its architecture, the generally shorter timeline for establishing significance in the art world is more relevant in this case than that of the architectural community.

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

1926 North Halsted Street has statewide significance under Criterion B because of its association with Roger Brown, a leading member of the influential school of American art known as Imagism, and one of Chicago's best-known twentieth-century artists. The building at 1926 North Halsted Street was Brown's home and studio for the majority of his mature career, from 1974 until 1995 (period of significance); he sold the building just before his death in 1997. It is where Brown created many of his most important artworks, including those now held in important museum collections around the world. It is also where Brown developed his signature artistic style, which relied heavily on his personal interpretations of Chicago's unmistakable architectural texture and on the influence of popular art forms like vintage advertisements and folk art. Scholarly appreciation of Brown's contributions to American art is well established, and has been growing since Brown's death. Brown undertook significant renovations of the 1888 building, turning it into a studio and living space that could house his extensive art collection, landscaping the backyard, and constructing a frame garage. The property is therefore significant not only as the place where some of Chicago's most popular twentieth-century art was created, but as an artwork itself, created by an important American artist. Furthermore, 1926 North Halsted is significant because it is the only remaining intact artist's studio, workshop and residence of the Imagist art movement, which was a crucial part of America's mid-twentieth-century artistic landscape, and which established Chicago as a unique and independent art center.

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Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

Introduction

Roger Brown was one of Chicago's best-known twentieth century artists, and a leading member of the influential school of American art known as Imagism. Locally, Chicagoans recognize Brown's artwork from seeing his paintings and sculptures in the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago and from his monumental mosaic depicting the flight of Daedalus and Icarus above the entrance to 120 North LaSalle Street, across the street from City Hall. Nationally, Brown's artwork has been collected by all of the major American art museums, and his paintings are frequently reproduced in books and periodicals including *The New York Times* and two *Time* magazine covers. (Image 4) Since 1969, Brown has been the subject of over two dozen solo exhibitions in museums and respected private galleries throughout America and Europe, and he has been included in dozens more group exhibitions throughout the world.

In 1980, art historian and critic Dennis Adrian described Brown as having been "in the forefront of one of the most absorbing and impressive directions of American art."³ Today, Brown's signature style, his incisive sense of twentieth century life, and his sharp sense of humor are as fresh and relevant as they were during his lifetime, and his status in the history of art and in popular opinion continues to grow. As the influential art historian, former curator at the Museum of Modern Art and current dean of the Yale School of Art Robert Storr wrote in 2008,

His days were up a decade ago, but with 9/11 and Katrina behind us and who knows what ahead, Brown's art has never been more timely, and it challenges us, when worst comes to worst, to prove we can still take a joke, especially when the biggest joke of all is ultimately us.⁴

The building at 1926 North Halsted Street in Chicago was Brown's home and studio for the majority of his mature career, from 1974 until 1995, just before his death in 1997. Because of the property's close association with the life of Brown, an important artist who lived and worked in Illinois for the majority of his life, it has statewide significance under Criterion B of National Register eligibility. It is where Brown developed his signature artistic style, which relied heavily on his personal interpretations of Chicago's unmistakable architectural texture and on the influence of popular art forms like vintage advertisements and folk art. The property has been maintained by the School of the Art Institute of Chicago as a house museum and study center according to Brown's wishes, and so displays an exceptional level of physical and functional integrity.

This property was not simply shelter for Brown for most of his adult life; it was a home that belonged uniquely to him. The interests in vernacular art and popular culture that were driving forces in Brown's work and one of his main contributions to twentieth century art were the same as those that led him to live and work out of this nineteenth century storefront in Lincoln Park. The building itself and its surroundings provided direct inspiration for his work, and their influence appears clearly and consistently in his art. Dozens of Brown's paintings, including "Silly Savages" from 1983 (Image 5) and "The Young and Self-Conscious" from 1991 (Image 6) are filled with streetscapes populated by humble brick storefronts like his own. Vintage sign lettering like that in the historic Chicago "The Daily News" advertisement on the north elevation of 1926 N. Halsted Street appear in Brown's artwork, often even incorporating the same pale shade of yellow as in the painted sign, as in "Hank Williams, Honky Tonk Man" from 1991. (Image 7)

Just as this property left its mark on Brown, he made his mark on it. With his partner, architect George Veronda, who died in 1984, Brown "turned an 1880s building into a place appropriate for modern living, but... didn't destroy the character of the old building."⁵ Brown's alterations to the building's interior have been preserved alongside its relatively intact cast-iron storefront facade and the many nineteenth century decorative elements that Brown chose to maintain. Brown's artistic influence is felt outside the house as well. Toward the end of his time at 1926 N. Halsted Street, Brown undertook a major renovation of the property's backyard, planting juniper shrubs, installing concrete garden furniture in a faux-English style, and building a garage with cheerfully painted cedar siding and decorative shutters. Brown's fascination with the mass-

³ Dennis Adrian, "Roger Brown and the Chicago Context: An Appreciation," in *Sight Out of Mind: Essays and Criticism on Art* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1985), 52.

⁴ Robert Storr, *Roger Brown: The American Landscape* (New York: DC Moore Gallery, 2008), 9.

⁵ Roger Brown, *For George: An Autobiography in Pictures*, (unpublished, 1972 - 1984), unpaginated.

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produced gentility of suburban American lawns that influenced the design for his own backyard can also be seen in the surreal and geometrically ordered landscapes of paintings like "Pasadena Garden Residence" (1971) (Image 8) and "Quilted Landscape" from 1973. (Image 9) Visitors to 1926 N. Halsted Street can see Brown's vision brought to life in the rocket-shaped junipers and simple frame garage that he installed in the backyard there. The combination of historic and artist-designed features at 1926 N. Halsted Street provides a fascinating record of Brown's life and work. One of Brown's greatest contributions to twentieth-century art was his ability to combine vernacular and popular art forms with his own exceptional humor and aesthetic talent, and this is precisely what is illustrated at this property. His home and studio are built manifestations of Brown's artistic sensibility.

1926 N. Halsted Street is significant because of its association with Brown's individual accomplishments and because it is a rare and well-preserved built resource for the study of art history in the State of Illinois. It is the most intact historic building and site related to the school of visual art known as Imagism, of which Brown was one of the best-known artists. Imagism was a major part of the cultural development in Chicago in the twentieth century. In Brown's *New York Times* obituary, art critic Roberta Smith described Brown as a leading member of the Imagist school, which was "one of the defining moments in postwar Chicago art."⁶ Imagist artists worked in a variety of styles and media, but they were defined by their interest in popular and vernacular art, their intensely personal approach to art-making, and their fierce independence from the conceptual and minimalist art that dominated the American art scene in the mid-twentieth century. The Imagists' refusal to imitate the majority of contemporary art contributed significantly to the establishment of Chicago as a self-directed and influential art center in its own right. In a 1999 essay for an exhibition of Imagist artwork at the Chicago Cultural Center, critic James Yood wrote of the Imagist movement in the 1960s:

Chicago's reputation as a cantankerous and impish art center fiercely independent of New York would be set; rarely again would Chicago regionalism ever be confused with provincialism.⁷

However, Imagism was not just important in Chicago. The Imagist interest in personal expression and vernacular art was echoed in New York's Pop Art movement, and the impact of the Imagists' insistence on independence from the mainstream can still be seen in the more pluralistic art scene that this country now enjoys. Imagism was therefore a crucial turning point in the history of twentieth-century American art, making it the most important artistic movement to come out of the State of Illinois in the past 100 years, and its only entirely native movement to have a significant effect on the course of modern American art. Imagist art is collected by major museums around the world and its importance in the history of art has been established by five decades of scholarly exhibitions, articles, essays, books, and films. As the only remaining building and site in Chicago closely associated with the Imagist movement, 1926 N. Halsted is a site of unparalleled art historical significance in Illinois.

The period of significance for 1926 N. Halsted is within the last fifty years, running from 1974 to 1995. Because of Brown's importance to Chicago's Imagist art movement, the fact that Imagist art was the most influential twentieth century art movement in the State of Illinois, and the lack of other built landmarks of Imagist art, 1926 N. Halsted is singular in the State of Illinois and it meets criteria consideration G of National Register eligibility for properties achieving significance within the last fifty years. The richness and importance of Chicago's contributions to the history of mid-twentieth-century art have been well documented in scholarly books, articles, and exhibitions, and 1926 N. Halsted Street is the only historic property in Illinois devoted to the preservation and study of this fertile period of Chicago's art history. Jim Peters, President and CEO of Landmarks Illinois has said that this property "represents one of the finest, most-intact examples of a modern artist's studio in America."⁸

In addition to the contextual significance of the property, Brown himself has been well established as an important figure in American art. Brown's artwork has already been added to the permanent collections of this country's most respected museums, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Chicago History Museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C., and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New

⁶ Roberta Smith, "Roger Brown, 55, Leading Chicago Imagist Painter, Dies," *The New York Times*, November 26, 1997. Accessed online at <http://www.nytimes.com/1997/11/26/arts/roger-brown-55-leading-chicago-imagist-painter-dies.html?pagewanted=1>.

⁷ James Yood, *Jumpin' Backlash: Original Imagist Artwork 1966 - 1969*, (Munster, Indiana: Northern Indiana Arts Association, 1999), 8.

⁸ Letter to Wellington Reiter, president of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, November 5, 2008.

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York, and outside the United States at institutions like the Museum of Modern Art in Vienna, Austria.⁹ The widespread inclusion of Brown's artwork in permanent museum collections is not only a testament to the past and current scholarly appreciation of his work, but also guarantees that Brown will continue to be studied by art historians and artists for generations to come. Even before his death, Brown was the subject of numerous solo shows around the world, including two major retrospective exhibitions, and this trend of exhibitions has continued since his death. Artists do not enjoy placement in such a caliber and range of museum collections and exhibitions without being considered historically important. Although fifty years is a relatively short time period in which to evaluate architectural significance, it has been more than enough time to establish Brown's art historical significance. Since this property is being nominated for its connection with Brown and Imagism, which were important aspects of Illinois's and America's art history, and not for its architecture, the generally shorter timeline for establishing significance in the art world is more relevant in this case than that of the architectural community.

The Life and Career of Roger Brown

Although Brown spent nearly his entire adult life in Chicago and his artwork has long been associated with that city, he began his life in the South, returned there often, and never lost his feeling for that part of the country. Like the rest of his Imagist colleagues, he believed in a personal approach to art making, although unlike the other Imagists, Brown's work was strongly informed by memories of life in the deep South and his experiences in the Midwestern North. Brown depicted American landscapes variously, from the lush, hilly topography of Alabama, the dramatic mountains and patterned landscapes of the West, the urban skyline of Chicago, and the expansive prairie landscapes of Illinois. He unified these diverse landscapes with a signature style that is unmistakably that of "Roger Brown," with his signature voluptuous cloudscapes suggesting that these different landscapes exist under the same grand and ever-changing sky. Brown was a master at expressing the country's diversity both physically and metaphorically, making his a truly American art, informed by Brown's strong sense of place.

Given the singularly original nature of Brown's artwork, a careful study of his background and life history is necessary in order to truly appreciate his professional achievements. James Roger Brown was born December 10, 1941 in Hamilton, Alabama to parents James Gordon and Mary Elizabeth Palmer Brown. From 1944 to 1945 Brown's father was in the Army fighting in Belgium, so Brown and his mother lived with his maternal grandmother, Cora Lee Palmer, and his great-grandmother Mary Dizenia Palmer, with whom Roger formed a close bond.¹⁰ When he was about five years old, his father left his job at a munitions factory in Childersburg, Alabama, where he had begun working after serving in World War II. The family moved to Opelika, Alabama. They lived with Brown's paternal grandparents on a cotton farm while his father established his own grocery store in town and built a new house for the family.¹¹

Brown's interest in art began very early. From second to ninth grades he participated in private art classes because there were none offered in his school.¹² At the same time, Brown was immersed in many of the elements of popular culture that would continue to inform his art for the rest of his life. He and his brother Greg, six years his junior, spent their afternoons at the Martin Theater, a popular local building with an Art Deco-style globe above its marquee. The brothers watched triple-features of cowboy and science fiction movies like "Mothra" and "Godzilla."¹³ The bizarre imagery of these movies held a lifelong sway over Brown's imagination, and forty years later, in 1988, Brown would paint "Mothra at Inner Circle Drive," depicting a gigantic moth hovering over a quiet suburban street. Roger and Greg also began collecting at a very young age. They hoarded toys, costumes, gadgets, comic books, and anything else that held their interest.¹⁴ Brown never abandoned this practice, and his house at 1926 N. Halsted Street in Chicago displays his unmatched collection of art and ephemera, which were integral to his artistic practice.

In addition to these popular interests, the particular environment of Alabama in the 1950s also had its effect on Brown's psyche. His family belonged to the Church of Christ, a strict, fundamentalist evangelical church that required Brown to attend multiple services and Bible study sessions each week and that prohibited dancing, drinking, and co-ed swimming. Brown always remembered the church's reliance on fear, fire and brimstone and reflected as an adult that in the Church of

⁹ See the full list of exhibitions and art collections that have included Brown's artwork in the Appendices.

¹⁰ Sidney Lawrence, *Roger Brown: Southern Exposure* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2007), 1.

¹¹ Sidney Lawrence, *Roger Brown* (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1987), 104.

¹² *Southern Exposure*, 2.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

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Christ religion was "sort of pounded into your head."¹⁵ Brown's early experiences with hard-line religion surely contributed to the undercurrent of foreboding that would become a hallmark of his artwork. Although for Brown this all-encompassing fear may have come specifically from the religious environment he experienced, in his paintings it can be seen as a universal expression of the terrors of modern life.

The physical landscape of Alabama made an equally great impression on Brown. In the summers when he was in high school, he traveled back to Hamilton to stay with his great-grandmother Mary Dizenia Palmer. The north Alabama highway he followed for the trip curved through green hills, passing gas stations, hamburger stands, and neon signposts. Brown absorbed the landscape and recreated it over and over again in his paintings as an adult, attempting to capture the Gothic mystery and optimistic pop that defined the southern American landscape in the 1950s.¹⁶

After finishing high school in 1960, Brown enrolled in Lipscomb College, the Church of Christ's Bible college in Nashville, Tennessee, with the intention of becoming a preacher. But his heart was never really in this pursuit, and he found himself much more excited about his painting and drawing classes than Bible study. After only a year, he left Lipscomb to devote himself to the study of art, first by taking classes at the University of Tennessee in Nashville. After traveling through the south and staying briefly in Mobile, Alabama, Brown returned home to Opelika to once and for all embark on his career as an artist. He noticed that many of the professional artists that he read about in catalogs had earned their degrees from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC), so he decided that that school would be the place for him.¹⁷ At the beginning of 1962, Brown moved north.

Moving to Chicago

Although Brown was no doubt excited to be attending the prestigious SAIC, he was also a pragmatic young man. He wanted to come to Chicago as soon as possible, so in January 1962 he began taking illustration classes at the American Academy of Art, a commercial art school in Chicago, before officially beginning his classes at the Art Institute in the fall. Upon enrolling at SAIC, Brown was immediately exposed to the exceptional teachers who would eventually shape his career. One of his first classes was a printmaking course taught by Ray Yoshida, an influential artist and teacher who would become one of Brown's lifelong friends and mentors.¹⁸ Nonetheless, Brown was frustrated by the lack of structure at SAIC and withdrew after four months in order to return to the American Academy of Art. By the end of 1964, Brown had completed the commercial design program there, which included classes on drawing and designing print advertisements.¹⁹

It may seem unusual that Brown would focus so earnestly on commercial art, but his experience was not entirely uncommon in Chicago, a city known for its publishing, advertising, and design industries. Many other young artists in Chicago began their careers studying commercial art or graphic design and many worked as illustrators for local magazines like *Playboy*. Far from being an unimportant interlude in their early artistic development, this experience would deeply influence their artwork, and contribute to Chicago artists' singular interaction with popular culture. The Imagist interest in popular art was not unusual for the time, as artists across the country like Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein were also drawing inspiration from advertisements and comic books. But unlike the New York City school of Pop Art, Chicago Imagists like Brown did not treat popular visual culture in a detached, analytical manner. Instead, they saw commercially designed images and objects as art in their own right, with sophisticated visual and emotional content that they hoped to capture in their work. The flat bright colors, graphic clarity, and punning humor common in advertising became hallmarks of Brown's work, although in his work they are often used as critiques of contemporary culture. Brown was perhaps such an effective satirist of corporate America because he knew his subject so well, and this familiarity was in part due to his studies at the American Academy of Art.

Indeed, Brown found himself unable to convincingly adhere to the straightforward "Colgate or Breck girl" style of illustration he learned in his commercial art classes.²⁰ He eventually returned to SAIC for one more year at the urging of a friend, only to leave again to work at the Chicago Decal Company for a year. But Brown failed again to excel as a traditional graphic designer. Although working at the Decal Company suited him because of his continued fascination with the flat, bright,

¹⁵ Ibid, 2.

¹⁶ Ibid, 1.

¹⁷ Ibid, 4.

¹⁸ Roger Brown, 105.

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ *Southern Exposure*, 4.

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colorful logos and signs that he remembered from the roadsides and toys of his childhood, there was no place for this imagery in most contemporary advertising. In 1966, Brown returned to SAIC to complete his Bachelor and Master of Fine Arts degrees.

Student Years 1966 - 1970

Brown underwent an intense artistic awakening during his first years back at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. He became immersed in its lively community of students and teachers and was exposed to all of the influences and inspirations that Chicago had to offer, exploring the city's museums, flea markets, and streets and meeting fellow artists of all ages and backgrounds. These formative years as a student at SAIC were crucial to the development of the mature artwork that Brown would produce for the rest of his life. Furthermore, several students at SAIC during this time period shared many of these experiences and would become the core group of Imagists. It was then that much of the tone and direction of the Imagist movement was born.

For Brown, as for generations of students before and after him, one of the great benefits of SAIC was that it was both a school and a museum. He took advantage of the huge variety of artwork on display in its galleries, finding inspiration in everything from Renaissance religious narratives by Giovanni di Paolo to twentieth-century surrealists like Giorgio de Chirico and Rene Magritte, to more contemporary artists who were as interested in the peculiarities of the modern American landscape as he was, such as Georgia O'Keeffe and Grant Wood.²¹ The influence of head curator A. James Speyer during this time was also very important to the development of Brown's art, as the museum's contemporary shows provided some of his earliest firsthand exposure to Pop artists like Andy Warhol and Claes Oldenburg.²²

Another major benefit of attending SAIC in the late 1960s was the quality and engagement of its teaching staff. In 1980, Brown described the "religious fervor" for art making that distinguished Chicago from the merely "political fervor" he saw in other urban art communities at the time. He credited this in large part to the support of passionate teachers like Whitney Halstead, Kathleen Blackshear, Ray Yoshida, and Ted Halkin.²³ In retrospect, it is hard to underestimate the profound influence of these instructors. The techniques and ideas that they imparted to their students would become the foundation of the Imagist art movement. In order to understand Brown's artwork and that of Imagist movement in general, it will be useful to discuss some of these foundational lessons.

Although Brown had already met Ray Yoshida during one of his earlier stints at SAIC, his first painting class with him in 1966 would turn out to be an exceptionally important experience. Perhaps Yoshida's most significant contribution to the development of Chicago's unique artistic culture at the time was his emphasis on using personal experience "so that one's art and life merge."²⁴ Critic Franz Schulze, who coined the term Imagism, described it as a movement defined by "strident personal expressionism."²⁵ Brown in particular took Yoshida's advice to heart, and brought a rich mixture of personal memories and inspiration to the creation of his first mature artworks. These paintings, abstract landscapes and moody movie theater scenes, combined his fascination with the artwork of Giorgio de Chirico, his love of comics, and personal experiences at Art Deco movie theaters in Chicago and in Opelika, Alabama. In 1968, Schulze described Brown's artwork and that of his closest colleagues as "so private in its surrealizing that the visitor may feel less like a visitor than a voyeur."²⁶

Yoshida was also known for introducing his students to the Maxwell Street flea market as a source of artistic inspiration. Maxwell Street had been a Chicago institution since the early 1900s, as people from all walks of life flocked to the open-air market on the near South Side to peruse the antiques and junk for sale and see the city's legendary blues musicians perform on the street corners. Brown went with Yoshida and fellow students Philip Hanson and Christina Ramberg to look for what Yoshida called "trash treasures - junk that is really good stuff with visual intensity and powerful form."²⁷ Having been an avid collector since his childhood, Brown needed little encouragement to build on his store of postcards, toys from

²¹ Ibid, 5.

²² Roger Brown, "Paintings and Recollections," in *Who Chicago?* (Sunderland, England: Sunderland Art Center, 1980), 31

²³ Ibid, 29.

²⁴ Ibid, 31.

²⁵ Russell Bowman, "Chicago Imagism: The Movement and the Style," in *Who Chicago?* (Sunderland, England: Sunderland Art Center, 1980), 23.

²⁶ Franz Schulze, "'The False Image' and the Image of Chicago," *Chicago Daily News - Panorama*, 1968.

²⁷ Roger Brown, 93.

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the 1920s, religious art, Elvis memorabilia, and whatever else he found in the market's booths. For Brown and Yoshida, collecting was not just a hobby, it was an important part of building one's artistic vocabulary. Living with one's collection was another way of following Yoshida's lesson of merging art and personal experience, and "involving one's whole life in visual things."²⁸ The environment that Brown would eventually create at 1926 N. Halsted revolved around his collection of art and ephemera. His home was not just a generic shelter for the creation of art, but a specific location that played an active role in his painting practice.

Brown also became interested in self-taught and folk art during this time. He picked up anonymous folk artwork at Maxwell Street, and was introduced in 1968 to fellow Chicagoan Joseph Yoakum, an untrained African-American artist who drew elaborate landscapes of exotic locations around the world. Despite being much older than Brown and his fellow students, Yoakum became an important part of their circle of artists. Brown and others exhibited with him often and purchased many of his drawings. The voluptuous intuitive line and strong linear patterns of Yoakum's drawings appealed to Brown. The guest bedroom in the apartment at 1926 N. Halsted Street would eventually be devoted almost exclusively to drawings by Yoakum, and today features thirty-six of his works. Brown called Yoakum "our Rousseau,"²⁹ referring to Henri Rousseau, a French self-taught painter of the early 1900s who was championed late in his life by Pablo Picasso, Robert Delaunay, and other famous European artists. With his Imagist colleagues, Brown brought Yoakum from a state of relative obscurity into becoming a nationally-known artist who was the subject of a solo show at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York at the time of his death in 1972. This example of the influence Brown and the Imagists had over curatorial and art historical interests even outside of Chicago is yet another testament to their significance in the art world.

In this and many other ways, Brown participated in Chicago's uniquely strong appreciation of so-called *art brut*, or art by the untrained. For decades, Chicago artists, dealers, collectors, educators, and curators had focused on works outside or new to the canon: surrealism, non-Western art, and folk art. In 1951 the French artist Jean Dubuffet delivered a seminal lecture at the Arts Club of Chicago entitled "Anti-Cultural Positions" in which he expressed his distrust of logic and intellectualism, described a connection between art and madness, and argued that Western civilization had created "a false dichotomy of values when it set beauty in opposition to ugliness."³⁰ Though the audience for Dubuffet's lecture was small, the ideas he presented eventually came to reflect those of many artists and collectors in Chicago. The lecture may have had some effect on the city's artistic community, and combined with the rich collections of non-Western art available for study by artists at the Field Museum of Natural History, the city developed a long and exceptional history of creating, collecting, displaying, and popularizing work that originated independently from the academic mainstream. Brown became a part of that history as a student at SAIC, advocated for the appreciation of work by self-taught artists for his entire life, and arranged for his home and collection to be a place where "his essentially democratic conviction that works of art from many cultures and genres be presented in an environment devoid of academic and economic hierarchies, where they can be appreciated as equal in value, on their own merits."³¹

Students at SAIC were also encouraged to look at non-Western art by popular art history teachers like Kathleen Blackshear and Whitney Halstead. At the same time that Brown was mining the treasures of Maxwell Street with Yoshida, he was also learning about Native American art from Halstead by visiting the Field Museum of Natural History.³² Yoshida had amassed a large collection of non-Western art as well, especially African masks. Brown was deeply impressed with these objects, and began collecting them himself. Whether consciously or not, their collections paralleled the outstanding collection of Parisian artist Andre Breton, whose collection of tribal art from many cultures was shown alongside works by Modern artists, in a dense arrangement similar to Brown's and Yoshida's collections. (Image 10)

Brown and his fellow students at SAIC were thus subject to a staggeringly diverse array of influences, which combined to produce a uniquely potent artistic environment in the city beginning in the late 1960s. One of the results of this exciting time in Chicago's art community was the Imagist movement. Although Brown flourished as an American artist well-known in his own right, he was also one of Imagism's most popular practitioners, so the story of Imagism is deeply embedded in the story of Brown's career. Brown's home and studio at 1926 N. Halsted is also significant in large part because it is the only remaining building associated with Imagism in Illinois. Therefore, it is useful to discuss the origins, development, and lasting legacy of the movement.

²⁸ Brown, *Who Chicago?*, 31.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 32.

³⁰ Whitney Halstead, *Made in Chicago*, (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1969), 11.

³¹ Lisa Stone, *Roger Brown: A Different Dimension*, (Montgomery, Alabama: Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, 2004), 19.

³² *Southern Exposure*, 5.

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Chicago Imagism

The term "Imagist" was coined by Chicago art critic Franz Schulze in an essay in 1959 and elaborated upon in his book *Fantastic Images* in 1972. Schulze used the term to describe three successive generations of Chicago artists, beginning in the late 1940s and ending with Brown's generation around 1970. The first generation of artists, often referred to as the Monster Roster, was made up of figurative expressionists such as Leon Golub and June Leaf. The name derived from their focus on morbid and fantastical subject matter. The second generation included painters like Robert Barnes and Irving Petlin, who created psychologically charged and surreal narrative scenes rendered in a loose, expressionistic style.³³ The final generation of Imagists, which included Brown, took the eccentricity of the previous two generations even farther, exploring the tawdry underside of urban life and relying on exuberant but darkly ironic humor. This final group is the one most often associated now with the Imagist term, but all three generations share a confident indifference to mainstream art trends, which were primarily established in New York and associated with New York's hegemony in the world of contemporary art.³⁴ The Imagists built the attitude of independence that came to define Chicago as a powerful art center in its own right in the mid-twentieth century.

In order to appreciate the significance of the Imagist movement, it is crucial to first understand the context in which it arose. In the late 1960s, the prevailing trends in contemporary art were Minimalist and Conceptual art, with the lingering presence of Abstract Expressionism. Easel painting was widely declared "dead," and there was little interest in any kind of figurative art.³⁵ New York was accepted as the center of the international art world, and smaller cities tended to emulate what they saw happening there. Chicago was no exception. Many of the Monster Roster artists of the 1950s had moved away by the 1960s, taking with them any hope of maintaining a "Chicago school" of art.³⁶ By the time Brown and the other Imagists were finishing their schooling, the city was ripe for an artistic revolution. These third-generation Imagists shared a "uniform disbelief in New York and the New York School,"³⁷ and set about establishing their own unique approach to art in Chicago that was independent of the east and west coasts of the country.

There was no common style to the Imagist movement, and this feature has made it both fascinating and confounding to generations of scholars. Artists cultivated their own unmistakable aesthetics, so Imagist art is characterized by a wonderfully rich diversity of visual forms. However, all of the artwork is clearly bound by a shared approach to making art, one that values personal expression, idiosyncrasy, and alternative sources of inspiration. Personal expression may not seem like an unusual motive for art making, but considering the overwhelming nationwide prominence of Conceptualism, the Imagists' reliance on the personal eccentricities of emotion and memory was as radical as any art movement in the country.

At the time, there were few places for very young, unknown artists to exhibit. The Hyde Park Art Center (HPAC) in Chicago's south side neighborhood of Hyde Park, near the University of Chicago, was one of these places. Beginning in 1966, the HPAC hosted a series of group shows organized by their director of exhibitions, Don Baum, which would introduce Chicago and the rest of the country to the Imagist sensibility. The first of these included artwork by Karl Wirsum, Jim Nutt, Gladys Nilsson, Art Green, Suellen Rocca, and James Falconer. The show's title, *Hairy Who?*, was based on Wirsum's confusion over the identity of a respected local critic and artist named Harry Bouras ("Harry who?"). The title provided a perfect introduction to the punning humor and flippant attitude towards "stuffy" art establishments that would become a hallmark of the Imagist movement. The same group exhibited three more times at HPAC between 1966 and 1968, in shows with titles based on the "Hairy Who" theme. They became known for the theatricality of the opening parties and the quirky way they presented their artwork. They made comic books to be distributed as catalogs, hung discount store price tags on their paintings, and covered walls of the gallery with linoleum.³⁸ (Image 11) The final Hairy Who show was in 1968, and the success of those first shows inspired future group shows at HPAC by related groups of artists. Later in 1968, Ed Paschke, Sarah Canright, and Ed Flood were exhibited in a show called *Nonplussed Some*, which had a second incarnation the following year.

³³ Bowman, 23.

³⁴ Yood, 8.

³⁵ Brown, *Who Chicago?*, 30.

³⁶ Yood, 6.

³⁷ Ibid, 8.

³⁸ Bowman, *Who Chicago?*, 21.

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Also in 1968, Brown received his Bachelor of Fine Arts from the School of the Art Institute and embarked on his Master of Fine Arts in painting. He was included in a fellowship show at the School, which provided a venue for HPAC curator Don Baum to see his artwork for the first time. Baum subsequently invited Brown and fellow classmates Christina Ramberg, Philip Hanson, and Eleanor Dube to participate in a group show at HPAC in the fall of 1968. The artists chose the title *False Image*, producing a group-designed poster inspired by commercial lettering and old postcard graphics. For the second *False Image* show the following year, the artists produced a set of decals, harkening back to Brown's early employment at the Chicago Decal Company. Like the Hairy Who, Brown and the other False Image artists relied heavily on personalized interpretations of commercial sources, but the stylistic diversity of Imagism is apparent in the differences between the two groups of artists. The False Image artists used muted colors and cultivated an "unsettling, dreamlike atmosphere"³⁹ in their paintings, in sharp contrast to the unhinged goofiness of the Hairy Who.

In 1970, HPAC hosted *Marriage Chicago Style*, another group show with Suellen Rocca, Karl Wirsum, Ed Flood, Sarah Canright, Ed Paschke, and Barbara Rossi, the opening reception of which was the "apex of Imagist theatricality."⁴⁰ Women wore wedding gowns and carried hockey sticks, men wore tuxedo tails with baseball pants and ice skates, and guests were fed champagne and wedding cake. Finally, in 1971, the same group of artists returned for *Chicago Antigua*, dressed as a team of elderly softball players. *Chicago Antigua* was the last of these Imagist shows at the HPAC.

Over the course of these few short years, the core Imagist artists in these shows went from a group of unknown students to the toast of Chicago's art world, with powerful collectors buying up their work and hosting parties to celebrate each opening. In 1969, Don Baum curated the Imagists' first museum show at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. Entitled *Don Baum Sez 'Chicago Needs Famous Artists'* it managed to transplant the spunky style and theatrical installations that characterized the HPAC shows into a more serious institutional setting, complete with an "octopuslike" furnace, a ping-pong table, walls papered with a brick pattern, and "other rumpus room. . . objects."⁴¹ The show was notable for Brown in particular, because it was his first museum exhibition.

Appreciation of the Imagist movement's national relevance was almost instantaneous, as art by the *Hairy Who* artists was exhibited in the Corcoran Gallery in Washington D.C. and the San Francisco Art Institute. In 1970, Brown was included in the first Imagist museum exhibition outside of Chicago. The show, at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia was called *Spirit of the Comics*, and displayed Brown and other Chicago artists alongside Pop artists from New York, some European artists, and Funk artists from the West Coast. This exhibition made it clear that Imagism's relationship to the coastal art worlds was one of independence, not isolation. With their broadening reputation, Chicago artists traded ideas and inspiration with Californian artists, and Karl Wirsum, Jim Nutt, and Gladys Nilsson all found work as art instructors in California for a time in the early 1970s.⁴² The Chicago artists were well aware of new movements on the east and west coasts, and their refusal to imitate them enabled them to create truly groundbreaking art on their own terms. The Imagist artists established Chicago as a culturally fertile city that contributed its own unique approach to America's contemporary art scene, rather than just as a franchise of the New York scene in the Midwest. While artists elsewhere mined popular art, drug culture, and the turbulent politics of the time as fodder for their art, the Imagist response was to address these subjects intimately, through the lens of personal memory, experience, and emotion.

Having made their presence known to art lovers and museums around the country, the Imagists began to establish themselves commercially. The Phyllis Kind Gallery in Chicago was a crucial part of this process.⁴³ By displaying and selling their work in a formal gallery setting, the legendary gallerist Phyllis Kind further validated the Imagists as a serious art movement. She began showing Jim Nutt, Gladys Nilsson, and Karl Wirsum in 1969, and Brown in 1970. The gallery soon represented ten Imagist artists, and it became synonymous with the group. Phyllis Kind worked assiduously to place Imagist artists' works in the best museum and private collections, and to encourage the serious art historical scholarship and criticism, which accompanied Imagism's fame.

As with any art movement, the lively community of scholars and critics that devoted their time and interest to Imagism was crucial in establishing, promoting, and preserving its place in art history. Baum and Kind were largely responsible for ensuring that Imagist artwork was displayed regularly around the country, while writers like Franz Schulze and Dennis

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 22.

⁴¹ Baum, 9.

⁴² Susan Regan McKillop, Ed. *The Chicago Connection*, (Sacramento, Calif. E.B. Crocker Art Gallery, 1976), 9.

⁴³ Bowman, 23

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Adrian discussed and advertised these exhibitions in the pages of national art magazines, local Chicago newspapers, exhibition catalogs, and their own widely read books and essays. Their academic approach and persistent love for the city's art have been a crucial foundation for the lively scholarship that continues to exist around Imagism.

Brown's Early Career

As the Imagist movement matured, so did Brown as an individual artist. He received his MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 1970, the same year that the Phyllis Kind Gallery began its twenty-seven year representation of his work. He was awarded a traveling fellowship from the School that year, and embarked on a trip around Europe and northern Africa, parts of it with classmates and fellow *False Image* exhibitors Philip Hanson and Christina Ramberg. This was one of the first of a lifelong series of national and international voyages on which Brown collected art and amassed an extensive slide library of photographs of folk art and vernacular architecture from around the world. He began showing these slides at lectures at the Phyllis Kind Gallery, and the Roger Brown Study Collection (RBSC) housed at 1926 N. Halsted Street preserves his slide library today. They are not only an indispensable window into the influences and inspirations for Brown's artwork, but also a unique historical record of vernacular art and architecture in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

In the spring of 1971, Brown had his first solo exhibition at the Kind Gallery, and would continue to have well received solo exhibitions there, regularly, for nearly three decades. At this time, Brown also began working on paintings based on current affairs, beginning with "D-Yard Attica."⁴⁴ He would continue revisiting current events as subject matter for the rest of his life, using everything from old-fashioned commercial graphics to Italian Renaissance-style narrative structure to produce biting commentary on contemporary social and political events.

The following year, 1972, was an important year for Brown personally and artistically and for the Imagist movement as a whole. Franz Schulze, the art critic who coined the term Imagism, published *Fantastic Images: Chicago Art Since 1945* in conjunction with another exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. Though Schulze had already discussed many of his ideas about Imagism in reviews and essays, *Fantastic Images* was one of the first books devoted to the subject, and remains an important piece of scholarship on the origins and early development of the movement.

Brown also became acquainted in that year with George Veronda, a young architect working at C.F. Murphy and Associates, an important Chicago firm that would eventually become Murphy/Jahn. Veronda helped Brown build on his longtime interest in architecture, and together they explored local landmarks of modern architecture, especially buildings by Mies van der Rohe.⁴⁵

As Brown's interest in architecture grew, he began painting images of skyscrapers towering against simple backgrounds. The first of these was used to illustrate a short story in *Playboy*.⁴⁶ The skyscraper images quickly developed into what would become known as Brown's "disaster paintings," which showed the buildings cracking and collapsing, often with their residents tumbling out of the windows. At the beginning of 1973, Phyllis Kind exhibited these paintings in Brown's second solo show at her gallery, called *Roger Brown Disasters*. Brown's signature silhouetted human figures in the falling buildings' windows, with their 1940s hairstyles modeled on those of his parents,⁴⁷ are miniscule and helpless in the face of complete structural failure. Today, the disaster paintings are as potent as ever, as popular concerns about the collapse of our overbuilt society become increasingly concrete and terrifying.

By 1974, Brown was thoroughly established as one of the leading artists in Chicago, and his national and international reputation continued to grow. He was included in *Made in Chicago*, the American exhibition at the Sao Paulo Bienal, which toured South America and stopped in Chicago and Washington, D.C. Brown's art was expanding as well, and he began making three-dimensional painted wood constructions in addition to painting. This development might have been encouraged by his first foray into set design the previous year for a one-act play staged at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (MCA).⁴⁸ Brown's earliest constructions were relatively simple painted excerpts from his two-dimensional work, like buildings or household appliances, but eventually they grew more complex. He began playing with

⁴⁴ Lawrence, *Roger Brown*, 107.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Lawrence, *Southern Exposure*, 7.

⁴⁸ Lawrence, *Roger Brown*, 108.

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representations of depth, by combining three-dimensional elements with two-dimensional paintings, and used an ever-widening array of media that eventually included taxidermy and ceramics.

Years at 1926 North Halsted

Brown's large canvases and increasingly complicated three-dimensional constructions required a larger working space. He was tired of renting and trying to paint in small apartments. He enlisted the help of John Vinci, his friend and an important local architect and preservationist, to help him find an appropriate building for him to purchase and use as a home and studio.⁴⁹ In 1974, he bought the building at 1926 N. Halsted Street. Brown's partner George Veronda, an architect at C.F. Murphy and Associates, designed a renovation plan with Brown's input. They created a studio and workshop for Brown in the first floor retail space and a two-bedroom apartment for both of them upstairs. The two men did all of the rehabilitation work themselves, working on the weekends so that it didn't interfere with Brown's painting or Veronda's architectural career. Although working on the building certainly required many different handiwork techniques than those Brown used in his artistic practice, his increasing professional interest in craftsmanship and construction of three-dimensional objects surely came from the same well of creative energy that drove him to undertake much of the renovation with his own hands.

The late-nineteenth century storefront building near Armitage and Halsted in Lincoln Park was well suited to Brown's needs personally and professionally. Both Lincoln Park and the building had seen better days, but had long, colorful histories, and were ripe with the kind of urban narratives that are a hallmark of Brown's paintings. The view out of the windows at 1926 N. Halsted was probably not unlike the one a viewer experiences in Brown's artwork: city streets lined with Chicago-style three-flat apartment buildings and storefronts and filled with down-but-not-out citizens acting out everyday dramas both funny and sad. Brown already had an artistic interest in vernacular commercial architecture, which can be seen in early paintings like "Central City" from 1970. (Image 12)

Although the significance of this property does not stem specifically from its architectural style, its preservation does provide a window into multiple important episodes in Lincoln Park's history including its commercial development in the nineteenth century and its subsequent rediscovery by conservationists and artists like Brown a century later. 1926 N. Halsted is therefore not only an important landmark in the history of twentieth century art, but also in the long history of Lincoln Park. As the neighborhood continues to develop, its history as an inexpensive area attractive to artists has become increasingly distant and invisible. This property is a rare reminder of that story, which is just as important to understanding Lincoln Park's present as its nineteenth century history.

Lincoln Park's colorful past made it a sensible location for Brown's home and workplace, given his interest in architectural and material history. In the 1850s, the area was populated by immigrant workers, especially German truck drivers, hence the neighborhood's nickname of the "Cabbage Patch." In 1871, the Great Fire devastated Lincoln Park, but perhaps since it was already a desirable, dense neighborhood near downtown, its residents did not hesitate in rebuilding. In the ensuing years, the presence of the North Branch of the Chicago River attracted a great deal of industrial activity. The people that worked in these plants set up their homes nearby, so the neighborhood remained a working-class, immigrant-rich area. But like much of Chicago, Lincoln Park was a study in contrasts. Alongside its heavy industry and dense housing were some of Chicago's greatest cultural treasures, including beautiful Lincoln Park (established in 1865), the Chicago Historical Society, the Chicago Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Lincoln Park Zoo, and eventually DePaul University.

1926 N. Halsted Street was constructed in 1888, at the height of the neighborhood's development as a commercial center after the fire. The architect was a German immigrant named Frederick Siebold. Over the course of its lifetime, the storefront tenants have included a tobacco shop, bookbindery, grocer, ice cream shop, and a plastic manufacturing company. The rest of the building held three apartments in addition to the retail space – two on the second floor and one behind the shop on the first floor. There are few records of the building's former interior or exterior appearance. Brown made a rough sketch of the existing layout of the second floor indicating the approximate location of walls, stairs, doors, and windows, but this is the only evidence of its former floor plan. (Image 2)

During the Great Depression, like many parts of the city, Lincoln Park's building stock deteriorated. Its buildings were neglected and increasingly subdivided to accommodate more and more tenants. After World War II, there was a concerted effort by the area's residents to improve it, but they avoided the kind of urban renewal happening elsewhere in the city that

⁴⁹ Roger Brown, *For George: An Autobiography in Pictures*, (Unpublished, 1972 – 1984), n.p.

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relied on demolition and land clearance, and instead encouraged the rehabilitation of individual properties. As a result, the neighborhood improved steadily without losing much of its historic architecture. However, progress was relatively slow, and by the mid-1970s, Lincoln Park was still rather rough around the edges, with many of its properties remaining unimproved.

By 1974, when Brown moved there, Lincoln Park still had a plentiful stock of relatively intact affordable old buildings that he could rehabilitate himself. Brown wanted a building that could hold a studio and workshop for him and an apartment for he and Veronda. The building at 1926 N. Halsted was well suited to both purposes. Its two apartments on the second floor could be combined into one for living, while the open plan retail space and apartment on the ground floor became Brown's studio and workshop, respectively.

Although Veronda was the professional architect, the design process was shared with Brown. Brown told Veronda the types of features he wanted, and Veronda used his expertise to design the best solution for Brown's requests. Brown said that it had never really occurred to him to install modern features in historic buildings, he was "stuck to a kind of art student idea of taking an old space and living with all its imperfections."⁵⁰ In his design for the building, Veronda "turned an 1880s building into a place appropriate for modern living, but he didn't destroy the character of the old building. He kept all the old trim where possible, even down to the black enameled doorknobs."⁵¹ According to Brown's sketch of the original layout of the second floor, the couple removed a number of walls. Rather than being two awkward, cramped apartments made of many tiny rooms, the second-floor quarters have open spaces suitable for modern life, entertaining, and, most importantly, living with an extensive collection of art.

Brown and Veronda also preserved many of the building's exterior historic details, including the cast-iron facade that Brown painted light blue. The property's neighbor to the north, set back from the street, reveals a painted advertisement for *The Daily News*. This feature of the property was appealing to Brown because of his interest in advertising graphics and vernacular art. Brown often used graphic styles borrowed from billboards and other signage in his paintings, especially in his later work created after he had lived at 1926 N. Halsted for some time. The advertisement is therefore a significant feature of Brown's home and studio as evidence of Brown's taste and influences and perhaps a source of inspiration itself. The particular shades of blue and yellow in *The Daily News* advertisement appear often in Brown's work, especially in the lit windows that populate so many of his paintings. (Image 13) Brown also likely chose the shade of blue paint he used to paint the cast iron storefront to match the blue in the advertisement.

Now comfortably ensconced in his new home with Veronda, Brown's career continued its upward trajectory. In 1974, a solo exhibition of his work at Galerie Darthea Speyer in Paris, his first exposure in Europe, was well received. The following year, Brown's dealer in Chicago, Phyllis Kind, opened a branch of her gallery in New York City. As the primary dealer of Imagist art, Kind's move to New York was seen as proof of national appreciation for Imagism itself.⁵² Kind was notorious for her astute business sense, and devoted herself only to the most talented artists, whom she was certain would be successful. The fact that Brown was chosen as the sole subject of Kind Gallery's inaugural show in New York was clear validation of his place as one of the most prominent Imagist painters in the country.

Artistically, Brown's work also kept evolving. In 1976 he began painting landscapes with prominent cloud shapes. Brown continued to develop this interest for the rest of his career, and turbulent skies were increasingly the focal point of his landscape paintings, rather than the land itself. Living in the Midwest exposed Brown to the unexpected excitement of low flat landscapes beneath broad, dramatic skies, where weather systems can be seen approaching for miles. Whether Brown's clouds were generic and puffy or specifically shaped to look like tornadoes or Mickey Mouse ears (in the case of "Another Shitty Day in Paradise" from 1993), he used them to cultivate the overwhelming sense of foreboding that makes his paintings so poignant. These landscapes use the physical realities of Midwestern geography and the atmospheric effects of the Great Lakes to exceptional metaphorical effect, showing the American people as miniscule figures toiling beneath a vast sky that moves in surprising and often sinister ways.

By the late 1970s, Brown had fully made the transition from being a famous Chicago artist to being a famous American artist. In 1978 he showed in *American Painting of the Seventies* at the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo, New York, the first of many national and international survey exhibitions to include Brown's art. That same year, he was invited to serve

⁵⁰ Roger Brown, *For George*.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Bowman, 22.

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on a panel of artists for the National Endowment of Arts in Washington, D.C.⁵³ He also continued to be involved in theatrical set design. In 1979, he designed both the set and costumes for *Così Fan Tutte* at the Chicago Opera Theater. His masterful ability to create brooding scenes in a cartoonish style made him an exceptionally good choice for the comic opera, and the project gave Brown the opportunity to create a sort of "living painting" in four dimensions instead of just two. Eight years later in 1987, the same production was revived, again with Brown's costumes and sets.⁵⁴

As his reputation as an artist continued to grow, Brown also began to spread out domestically. In 1977, he purchased land in New Buffalo, Michigan, eighty-five miles northeast of Chicago. In 1979, he and Veronda completed construction on a modernist glass and steel pavilion-style home and a studio and guest house on the property, both designed by Veronda. Like the property at 1926 N. Halsted Street, the house in New Buffalo was created with the installation of Brown's collection of art and ephemera in mind. The wide-open and light-filled modern spaces were a perfect container for his continually growing collection. Also like the main residence in Chicago, the New Buffalo home was intended to be a special environment for the contemplation of art, architecture, and landscape design, although in Michigan the architecture was modern instead of historic and the surroundings rural instead of urban. Both settings were stimulating to Brown artistically, and the importance of this sense of place in Brown's work can be seen in the rolling brown hills dotted with tufts of dune grass that began to appear in his paintings after the construction of the house in Michigan. However, the New Buffalo property never replaced 1926 N. Halsted Street as Brown and Veronda's primary residence.

As Brown's notoriety in the art world grew, major non-art publications increasingly turned to his paintings to illustrate their pages. In 1984, Brown's "Peach Light" was used by *Encyclopedia Britannica* to illustrate an article on AIDS,⁵⁵ one of many such requests Brown began receiving around this time. Also in 1976, Brown painted "The Entry of Christ Into Chicago," showing a small figure of Christ on a flatbed truck riding down a street lined with the familiar Chicago skyline and a dais holding a Cardinal of the Catholic Church and Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley. (Image 14) The title of the painting was a direct reference to the painting "Christ's Entry into Brussels in 1889," by famous Belgian artist James Ensor, which was on view at the retrospective of James Ensor's work at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1976. In this and many other works Brown referenced iconic examples of art, and placed himself squarely in the trajectory of art history. Like Ensor in 1888-1889, Brown questioned what would happen if Christ made a second coming in a particular place and time, in this case Chicago of 1976.

Alongside this relatively obscure art historical content, the painting also had plenty of popular appeal. Without any knowledge of Ensor's original painting, the average Chicagoan could appreciate the dark humor of Christ encountering Mayor Daley's Chicago. Brown was unique among contemporary artists in his ability to succinctly capture popular sentiments in his paintings, and the frequent use of his artwork in the mainstream media bears this out. Though Brown's paintings are certainly as intellectually complex as any, his deep love of popular art forms made him exceptionally good at communicating with a much broader audience outside the art establishment.

"The Entry of Christ Into Chicago" is also a prime example of the effect the City of Chicago had on Brown and his artwork. Having been taught by Ray Yoshida of the importance of using his personal experiences in his art, Brown loved incorporating Chicago streets in his paintings. In a 1995 essay, Judith Russi Kirshner, a critic and historian at the University of Illinois Chicago (and Dean of the College Architecture and the Arts) described Brown's relationship to local architecture this way:

Of all the contemporary artists associated with Chicago, Roger Brown has most consistently represented the city, indeed, taken its architectural profile as signature of his own work

... Brown's paintings, huge and complex, capture the span of Chicago's modern skyline for its nostalgic appeal and chronicle its underlying violence and hidden secrets as tiny tableaux illuminated in every window.⁵⁶

When he first came to Chicago and lived downtown, Brown walked along the lakefront and watched the glittering lights of the Loop buildings.⁵⁷ This experience, coupled with his more intensive study of architecture with Veronda, surely

⁵³ Lawrence, *Roger Brown*, 110.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 113.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 112.

⁵⁶ Judith Russi Kirshner in *Art in Chicago: 1945 – 1995*, (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1996), 134.

⁵⁷ Lawrence, *Roger Brown*, 93.

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contributed to the images of skyscrapers that dominated his paintings and sculptures throughout the 1970s and onward. The Chicago skyline is explicitly featured in many of Brown's paintings, including "Lake Effect" from 1980 (Image 15) and "Land of Lincoln" from 1978. (Image 16) But while living in Lincoln Park at 1926 N. Halsted, Brown became more acquainted with the humble neighborhood buildings that make up the majority of Chicago's architectural fabric. He walked the side streets of Lincoln Park and could see the silhouettes of people in the windows of the storefront buildings typical of Chicago. In "The Entry of Christ Into Chicago," these buildings are in the foreground and indicated by the whimsical variation in their rooflines – a common sight on Chicago streets. Brown plays with the city's geography by putting these little buildings across the street from a solid line of downtown landmarks including the Hancock Building, the Standard Oil building, and the Sears Tower. Though no such streetscape exists in reality, Brown used it to create a sort of thumbnail image of the city's wonderful architectural diversity.

In "Silly Savages" from 1983 (Image 5) Brown further plays with geography by transplanting a row of two-story buildings just like his own and others in Lincoln Park – identifiable by their central entries, large storefront windows, and prominent cornices – into a New York City landscape. The painting was inspired by a *New York Times Magazine* article about the art world, and is identified as New York by the twin towers of the World Trade Center and King Kong on the Empire State Building in the distance. Clearly Brown did not include two-story nineteenth-century buildings like his own in paintings because he was interested in architectural accuracy. The model of his own home became a generic construction that permeated many of the urban landscapes he painted. These artworks are typified by the use of abstract, cartoonish rendering of social confusion or misery, and the universalized architectural form based on 1926 N. Halsted Street is an important part of Brown's signature perspective on urban life.

By the beginning of the 1980s, Brown's artwork was increasingly singled out for major museum exhibitions. The St. Louis Art Museum and the University Art Museum in Berkeley shared a show of his paintings in 1980. That same year he traveled home to Alabama for the opening of his first retrospective, which originated at the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts and traveled to the Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. Project Studios One (P.S. 1) in New York, one of the country's most prominent venues for contemporary art, included Brown in a popular three-person show called *Image into Pattern*.

Perhaps the most important exhibition for Brown in 1980 was *Who Chicago?*, a survey of Imagist art at the Sunderland Art Centre in London. Not only was it one of the first and most comprehensive exhibitions of Imagist art, it provided further European exposure for Brown and his fellow Imagists. Brown's 1978 painting "Land of Lincoln," which shows the Chicago skyline looming over rolling fields and refracted in a row of red stormy clouds, was chosen for the cover of the exhibition catalog, and Brown was the only artist to write an essay in the book. The *Who Chicago?* exhibition no doubt introduced a number of European visitors to Imagism for the first time, and the accompanying catalog is one of the most cogent and complete appraisals of the movement. The fact that Brown was chosen to represent this show on the catalog cover and in an essay was no small honor, and further established Brown's prominence as an Imagist and as an important American painter.

Another testament to Brown's increasing influence in the art world and beyond was the number of commissions for public art projects he received. In 1982, he painted "American Buffalo (An Imaginary View of Chicago from the Prairie)" to be hung near the Governor's office in Helmut Jahn's recently completed State of Illinois building in downtown Chicago.⁵⁸ The following year, the Washington, D.C. office of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill commissioned a mural by Brown for an Amtrak train station in Maryland. Unfortunately, the project was abandoned and Brown's preparatory paintings lost.⁵⁹ In 1990, Brown would complete one of his most visible pieces of public art, an Italian glass mosaic (created in sections at the Crovatto Studio in Spilimbergo, Italy and erected in Chicago), entitled "The Arts and Sciences of the Ancient World: The Flight of Daedalus and Icarus" at the 120 North LaSalle Street office tower in downtown Chicago also designed by Helmut Jahn. (Image 17) The largest section of the mosaic is located above the entrance to the skyscraper, directly across the street from Chicago's City Hall, with another panel in the building's lobby. Brown chose the subject matter in part to celebrate Chicago's architectural achievements: in Greek mythology, Daedalus was a skilled architect and craftsman. But it was also a mild cautionary tale for the building's corporate and governmental neighbors given that the myth ends with Daedalus's son Icarus falling to his death after flying too close to the sun. All of these public commissions, and the artistic freedom Brown was granted in them, show that he had become one of Chicago's most notable artists. His contributions to

⁵⁸ Lawrence, *Roger Brown*, 111.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 112

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the national and international art world were something for the city to be proud of, and Brown himself was one of the city's treasured cultural resources.

Throughout the late 1970s and 1980s, Brown continued to be the subject of solo shows almost every year at Phyllis Kind's galleries in Chicago and New York. Galleries in San Francisco, Houston, Washington D.C., Los Angeles, and London also mounted exhibitions of his artwork. In a 1979 review in New York's *Village Voice*, critic Carrie Rickey said "I know of no other paintings so abundant in narrative and formal content, so entertaining in their earnestness."⁶⁰ The traditional storytelling and drafting ability that had made Brown somewhat of an outlier in the 1960s art world dominated by Conceptualism and Minimalism were now his claim to fame in the more diverse art world of the 1980s. "Mini-movements" such as graffiti art and Neo-Expressionism sprang up around influential artists like Keith Haring and Julian Schnabel. Brown's fierce independence, obvious talent, and the razor sharp cultural commentary in his paintings all ensured his prominent place in this new landscape.

Brown had always been politically aware, in both his personal and artistic lives. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, his work took on an even more overtly political quality as he increasingly based his paintings on contemporary news stories. His signature style inspired by retro commercial graphics and signage was especially well suited to this subject matter. He depicted the real-life horrors of the world with the directness and clarity of a news headline, but from a seemingly innocent perspective, wrapping them all in a colorful coating that made them that much more grotesque.

Based on his exceptional skill as a social commentator, Brown was increasingly included in exhibitions organized around broad themes of politics and comedy.⁶¹ He had participated in shows about Chicago or the Midwest from the earliest stages of his career, but like any great artist, he was progressively less defined by his region and more by the content of his work. Some of these thematic exhibitions included *The Political Landscape* at the Rutgers University Robeson Center Gallery, *Comic Iconoclasm* at the Institute of Contemporary Art in London, and *Utopian Visions* organized by the Museum of Modern Art in New York. In 1984, Brown's artwork was shown at the American Pavilion of the Venice Biennale, one of the world's most prestigious exhibitions of contemporary art. The show was entitled *Paradise Lost / Paradise Regained: American Visions of the New Decade*. The title indicates that the vision of America as both wondrously amusing and irredeemably bleak that Brown had been illustrating in Chicago since his student days was now shared even in the top levels of the international art world.

The professional achievement of being included in the Venice Biennale was bittersweet for Brown, as it came nearly simultaneously with a crushing personal loss. That same year, 1984, his partner George Veronda succumbed to his battle with lung cancer. The devastation of losing his beloved life partner was expressed in his paintings. Works such as "Final Arbiter," "Acid Rain," "The Plague," "Nuclear Winter," and "Cancer," all from 1984, increasingly depicted the skeletal spectre of death. However, in the following years, not only did Brown's output not diminish, but it increased. Brown honored Veronda in his hand-made, one of a kind book, *For George: An Autobiography in Pictures*, which was adapted in a special double edition of *Private Arts* published in 1994.

In 1987, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C. organized a retrospective of Brown's artwork, curated by Sidney Lawrence. The show traveled across the country, to the La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, the Lowe Art Museum at the University of Miami, and the Des Moines Art Center. It was also accompanied by a major catalog including several essays, dozens of images of Brown's artwork, and a detailed chronology of his life and career. Though Brown was only forty-six years old at the time, and still producing new and innovative art, the opening of the retrospective in the nation's capital at one of the country's premiere contemporary art museums was a fitting tribute to his status as a celebrated American artist.

In the 1990s, Brown continued to expand on his interest in landscape and current affairs. His paintings based on news items became increasingly biting, often including highly realistic depictions of famous figures framed by banners bearing satirical commentary, in the manner of circus freak show banners. In 1990 and again in 1993, *Time* magazine used Brown's artwork on their cover. (Image 4) Both issues were concerned with the collapse of urban American society; the 1990 cover story was titled "The Rotting of the Big Apple," and was headlined with the "I Heart New York" logo with a jagged crack down the middle of the heart. Brown's painting shows the Brooklyn Bridge, the Guggenheim Museum, and the Chrysler building under an ominous sky, with an adult bookstore and sleazy movie theater in the foreground. In 1993, for a cover story called "Los Angeles: Is the City of Angels Going to Hell?," Brown painted the Hollywood sign in black hills

⁶⁰ *Southern Exposure*, 12.

⁶¹ Lawrence, *Roger Brown*, 111.

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looming above twin expressway exit ramps choked with cars. Brown's dark view of America's current state was officially front-page news in mainstream society.

In 1991, an African burial ground holding the remains of between ten and twenty thousand freed and enslaved Africans was discovered in lower Manhattan during the excavation for the Federal Building at Foley Square. Brown was one of the first artists commissioned to commemorate the site. In 1994 his large glass mosaic mural "Twentieth Century Plague: The

Victims of AIDS," was installed in the newly completed Foley Square Federal Building at 290 Broadway. Brown's statement accompanies the mural:

On this ancient cemetery site below the modern skyline of New York City a contemporary tapestry of human faces, each made thin and hollow by the ravages of AIDS, descends like some medieval nightmare into a mosaic of death heads in memory of those of all races who have suffered and died too soon.⁶²

In September 1997, the last glass mosaic mural Brown designed, "Hull House, Cook County, Howard Brown: A Tradition of Helping," was dedicated at the Howard Brown Health Center (no relation to Roger Brown) in Chicago. It features an image of Hull House and the historic Cook County Hospital, providing a public example of Brown's interest in Chicago's built landmarks. (Image 18) The following statement by Brown is displayed with the mural:

This mosaic represents some of the institutions that offer compassion and aid to the many ethnic, economic and minority groups in the city. Jane Addams started Hull House to aid the influx of European immigrants during the nineteenth century. Cook County Hospital offers needed medical aid to the poor and outcast. Howard Brown offers health care and treatment to the gay and lesbian community, who historically found fear and shame in seeking medical help.

Brown specifically chose Italian glass mosaic for these commissions, as he wanted to use an ancient medium to depict the profound themes of his public artworks. All of the murals were created in sections at the Crovatto Studio in Spilimbergo, Italy and erected at their respective sites. As these late murals, and Brown's Daedalus and Icarus mural attest, Brown was recognized as an artist who could create commanding and meaningful works of art for public places, addressing the issues of his time as both temporal and timeless.

In addition to continued regular solo shows at Phyllis Kind's galleries in Chicago and New York, Brown was the subject of solo shows throughout the 1990s in galleries in New Orleans and Atlanta, and an exhibition entitled *Roger Brown: California Dreamin'* at the Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum. He also was consistently included in group shows around the world, including a traveling show of American art organized by the Milwaukee Art Museum and *Parallel Visions: Modern Artists and Outsider Art*, which originated at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 1992 and traveled to Basel, Madrid, and Tokyo over the course of the following year.

Brown made some important personal changes in the mid-1990s. He purchased land in La Conchita, California, and hired Stanley Tigerman, an important Chicago architect, to design a new home and studio for the property. He also undertook the landscape design of his backyard at 1926 N. Halsted Street that resulted in a deliberate, cohesive setting which completed Brown's evolving architectural vision for the entire property. This vision is still extant. In Brown's last sketchbook, which includes sketches from 1993 to 1997, is a design for a formal garden setting that included architectural, sculptural, and plant elements. (Image 1) Brown arranged concrete pavers in concentric circles around the iron catch-basin cover in the middle of the yard, planted juniper trees at each corner of the space, and installed concrete garden furniture and sculptures of Neptune and Persephone. The space is simple and understated, but close inspection reveals that Brown's sense of humor is at work even here. From the cedar-sided garage with double-hung windows, the juniper bushes, and reproduction English garden furniture, Brown recreated in his own backyard a real-life version of the surreal

⁶² Roger Brown, "The Roger Brown Mosaic at Foley Square, New York" (brochure distributed by the African Burial Ground National Monument, 1991), n.p.

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gentility seen in so many of his landscape paintings, which combined features of formal Italian gardens with mass-produced vernacular elements.

By 1995 the California house was complete, and Brown began spending his winters there. He decided that year to donate his studio and residence in New Buffalo, Michigan to SAIC and, in 1996, he donated his collection at 1926 N. Halsted Street to SAIC. The School subsequently purchased the building. Two years later, in November of 1997, Brown died a few weeks prior to his fifty-seventh birthday. Brown bequeathed his home and collection in La Conchita, another unimproved property in California, and all 103 of his paintings that were unsold at the Phyllis Kind Gallery at the time of his death to SAIC.

The Legacy of Brown and the Chicago Imagists

Since Brown's death, solo shows of his artwork have been mounted all over the country and he has been included in group exhibitions internationally. In 2004, the Montgomery Museum of Fine Art in Alabama organized the exhibit *Roger Brown: A Different Dimension*, which explored his sculpture and three-dimensional paintings and was shown at the Montgomery Museum and at the Chicago Cultural Center. In 2007, the Jule Collins Smith Museum at Auburn University in Alabama organized an exhibition focusing on Brown's Southern roots, entitled *Roger Brown: Southern Exposure*. The show was accompanied by a major catalog, and traveled to the Katzen Arts Center at American University in Washington, D.C. and the Ogden Museum of Southern Art at the University of New Orleans. In 2008, DC Moore Gallery in New York organized the exhibition *Roger Brown: The American Landscape*, which was well received and accompanied by a catalog with an essay by Robert Storr, Dean of the influential Yale School of Art, a former curator at the Museum of Modern Art, and one of the country's preeminent art critics.

Brown's reputation has been unquestionably established in the museum world, and his artwork can be found in all of the country's major public collections, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Los Angeles County Museum; Art Institute of Chicago; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Smithsonian American Art Museum, D.C.; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, among many others.

Brown and the other Imagist artists have received national and international attention since the inception of the third wave of the movement in 1966, and appreciation for the full scope of their importance to twentieth century art continues to grow. The trajectory of Brown's career described above indicates how ahead of his time he truly was. Many of the themes, attitudes, and approaches that defined Brown's artwork proved to be increasingly relevant with time, as his steadily growing national and international reputation has indicated. His whole-hearted appreciation of vernacular art forms and his highly personal approach to the philosophical and political issues addressed in his painting are thoroughly contemporary, and will continue to be appreciated anew by successive generations of art historians. Lisa Stone, curator of the Roger Brown Study Collection says:

[Brown's] artistic legacy has particular potency, in that he painted temporal subjects with an uncanny prescience that gives them fresh relevance when viewed against the backdrop of each new political, social, or cultural moment.⁶³

Brown's ability to clearly articulate his highly personal, emotional reaction to his particular environment is perhaps the reason for his continued relevance. Though each viewer's circumstance is unique, it is the process of looking at and coming to terms with one's surroundings that Brown so accurately portrays, and that experience does not change with the scenery. His paintings, populated with generic silhouettes based on those of his own parents and generic buildings based on particular places in Chicago and Alabama, have both the specificity of personal memories and the generality of print advertisements. These elements combine to create an art that is both gently poignant and shockingly direct. The unexpected complexity of this combination has fascinated art critics and historians for generations, while its straightforward power has captivated the millions of Americans who have been Brown's audience.

For the past half-century, Brown's artwork has been appreciated, admired, and absorbed both in the exclusive halls of the contemporary art establishment and in public spaces and newsstands across the country. From the very beginning of his career, Brown sought to absorb the power and clarity of vernacular art, and the universal approval his work enjoys now is

⁶³ Lisa Stone in *Southern Exposure*, 48.

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proof of his success. He changed the way artists thought about popular culture and the way popular society thought about art, and his significant contribution to the course of American art and culture will continue to be felt far into the future.

The appeal Brown's artwork holds for the wide American public is one reason that he is among the most prominent of the Imagist artists. However, the Imagist movement made its own contributions to the history of American art in the twentieth century, independent of Brown. Unfortunately, no other buildings associated with Imagism remain in Chicago, so the significance of the building at 1926 N. Halsted comes from its association with Imagism as well as from Brown individually.

As with Brown, the number of national and international exhibitions of Imagist art has continued apace in the decades since its inception. In museum galleries, exhibition catalogs, and scholarly essays, art historians across the world continue to appreciate and describe the full impact of Imagism on twentieth century. The attached bibliography shows the breadth of written scholarship that has been produced on the subject, and exhibitions about Imagism have been mounted around the country. In addition to those already described, these include shows dedicated to the movement held at the Art Institute of Chicago, the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, the Smart Museum of Art at the University of Chicago, the Chicago Cultural Center, the Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago, the Kresge Art Museum at Michigan State University, the Davenport Museum of Art in Iowa, the Madison Museum of Contemporary Art in Wisconsin, and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia.

Since its genesis in the halls of SAIC, the Imagist movement has been characterized by its independence. Brown and his artist colleagues knew from a young age that they wanted to create in Chicago a kind of art that was totally unlike anything being practiced elsewhere in the world, and they committed their considerable intelligence, originality, and talent to achieving that goal. In terms of Chicago's relationship to the rest of the art world, Imagism's influence has therefore been significant. The attitude of independence that characterizes the Chicago art world today was born in the 1960s with artists like Brown and the Imagist movement. In a 1999 essay for an exhibition of Imagist artwork at the Chicago Cultural Center, critic James Yood wrote:

Chicago's reputation as a cantankerous and impish art center fiercely independent of New York would be set; rarely again would Chicago regionalism ever be confused with provincialism.⁶⁴

However, Imagism did not and does not only affect Chicago. From the very beginning, with the *Spirit of the Comics* exhibition in Philadelphia, Imagism participated in the cross-country dialog that shaped American art in the 1960s and 1970s. Then and now, artists like West Coast comics legend Robert Crumb and the wildly popular contemporary painter and sculptor Jeff Koons have been inspired by the potency of Imagist art – Crumb through his shared interest in comics and Koons through his time as a studio assistant to Brown's Imagist colleague Ed Paschke. In 2008, when the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago (MCA) mounted an extraordinarily successful exhibition of Koons's artwork, they produced an accompanying show of Imagist artwork that showed that Koons's tremendous present-day success is an example of Imagism's continued influence in American art. Koons's sizeable contributions to contemporary art - with his commercial quality large-scale sculptures of balloon animals, floral arrangements, and other popular symbols of sentimentality - are arguably a direct extension of his exposure to the Imagist tendency to present psychologically charged subject matter in the vocabulary of popular culture. The catalog for the exhibition included an interview with MCA curator Lynne Warren about the effect of Imagism on Koons's work, in which Koons specifically cited Brown's skyscraper paintings as influential, saying

I think there was and is transcendence in [Paschke's and Brown's] work into objective art and mass iconography. I just wanted to continue to proceed in that direction.⁶⁵

After the heavily intellectual conceptual art of the early 1960s, there was a groundswell of artists who became fascinated with popular culture as a valid source of artistic inspiration. The Imagist artists in Chicago were among the first in the country to understand the richness of this subject matter, and struck out to explore it independent of the New York art establishment. Imagism therefore played a crucial role in the sea change that came over American art in the late 1960s. Its lack of cohesive style makes it difficult to define, but its diversity should not be considered a fault, but rather another example of its radicalism. The fervor, commitment, creativity, and talent of Chicago's Imagist artists were instrumental in

⁶⁴ Yood, 8.

⁶⁵ Francesco Bonami, Ed., *Jeff Koons* (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2008), 21.

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American art's progress from the ascendancy of Minimalism in the 1960s to the more pluralistic art scene of today. As the city's only remaining historic site devoted to the study and appreciation of Imagist art, 1926 N. Halsted Street is a significant location for this ongoing period of American art history.

The Influence of 1926 North Halsted Street on Brown and Others

When Brown purchased the building at 1926 N. Halsted Street in 1974, he was a young artist recently out of school with his career on the rise. The building was run down, infested with rats, and divided up into a warren of tiny apartments. By 1995, when Brown moved out, he was an internationally-renowned artist whose artwork had been shown in museums around the world, and 1926 N. Halsted Street contained a significant American artist's studio, a modern residence of carefully-designed spaces, and Brown's important collection of art. Brown's abstracted renderings of the building had appeared in dozens of his urban landscape paintings, which were being shown and collected all over the world. In addition, the building's largely intact 1880s storefront was even then an increasingly rare sight in Lincoln Park, a neighborhood now characterized by a homogenously affluent population, with newly-constructed mansions and franchise retail. A discussion of Brown's approach to and use of 1926 N. Halsted Street will show that it is not merely the place where he lived for the artistically mature part of his life, but a charged environment that exerted an undeniable influence on Brown's artwork even as it was itself a product of his creativity.

The entire building, along with its backyard and detached garage, is a cohesive expression of Brown's philosophical outlook and his artistic sensibilities. Brown and Veronda did all of the rehabilitation with their own hands, only hiring professionals for the plumbing and electrical work. They created open spaces and long sight lines to accommodate the display and appreciation of their significant collection of art and ephemera, the contemplation of which was an important part of Brown's artistic practice. The interior spaces were designed in the height of 1970s modern style, but Brown and Veronda also preserved the building's special original details like moldings, enamel doorknobs, tall double-hung windows, the painted advertisement on its north facade, and its largely intact façade. Even in the contemporary open-plan interior one never loses sight of its long history as a humble storefront building. Just like Brown's visual art, the building at 1926 N. Halsted combines forward-thinking modern innovation with a deep appreciation for historical and vernacular elements. In this way, 1926 N. Halsted Street can be considered Brown's largest artwork: at this site Brown created a home and studio that featured vernacular architectural elements and a diverse collection of inspirational objects all held together in a stylish and clean-lined space. In Brown's urban paintings a similarly diverse collection of inhabitants, including classic cars, vintage signs, various urban ephemera, and curiously coiffed human beings, exist in world full of buildings bearing the markings of history, but stripped to their simplest, most modern silhouette. (Image 13) In the backyard of 1926 N. Halsted, Brown installed his signature tongue-in-cheek comment on the great American outdoors, characterized here, as in his paintings, by rigid symmetry and mass-produced decorative elements. (Image 8)

The mixture of nineteenth century and 1970s design features at 1926 N. Halsted is not simply significant because it reflects Brown's unique approach to art and life. Brown's choice to preserve the building's original storefront and interior design features, and his decision to have his building and collection kept as a house museum and instructional resource for the SAIC, means that 1926 N. Halsted Street is one of very few places where visitors can see a first-hand illustration of Chicago's transition from a nineteenth-century commercial hub defined by its humble cast-iron storefronts to a twentieth-century cultural center populated by nationally-renowned artists like Brown and the other Imagists. It is not uncommon for Chicago's nineteenth-century commercial history to be recognized in landmark buildings and districts, since that legacy is easily appreciated through its architecture. However, as Chicago has evolved away from its industrial roots, its cultural commodities, especially in the visual arts, have become much more important to its development than its commercial activity. Because art historians are by definition more interested in art objects than the built landscape, there are few landmarks of Chicago's twentieth-century artistic history, even though it is just as rich and significant as its nineteenth century commercial history. Because of Brown's interest in historic architecture, 1926 N. Halsted presents an opportunity for contemporary audiences to engage with both Chicago's artistic and architectural legacies and understand the ways in which the two stories intertwined.

As the locus of Roger Brown's studio, where he created many hundreds of works and built a reputation as an important American artist, and as his residence, where he could retreat from the demands of his studio practice and be inspired and refreshed by his extensive art collection, 1926 N. Halsted St. encapsulated Brown's philosophical approach and his artistic sensibilities. He expressed this in a letter to RSBC curator Lisa Stone in 1997, a few months before his death:

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I have often thought of referring to the Collection as Artists' Museum of Chicago. Not "Chicago Artist's Museum" – but "Artists' Museum of Chicago" because I feel the things in the collection are of universal appeal to all artists and people with a sense of the spiritual and mystical nature that material things can evoke.⁶⁵

Brown's dream that the house and its collection would provide visual and intellectual inspiration to "all artists and people" has been fulfilled. As the Roger Brown Study Collection, the building hosts classes offered by the SAIC and guided tours of the collection. For art students and visitors alike, experiencing Brown's home and studio is an important introduction to the history of Chicago art and a valuable lesson in how artists combine their personal and professional lives.

James Rondeau, the influential curator of modern and contemporary art at the Art Institute has said

... there is no better example in the City of Chicago of a single space in which the exigencies of residential life and the eccentricities of creative life come together so seamlessly under one roof. The Roger Brown House and Study Center offers a meaningful example of the ways in which artists, indeed all citizens, can engage themselves in a perpetual state of re-making the experience of home, and, in turn, of self.⁶⁷

In addition to being a rare window into the life of one of America's most influential twentieth-century artists, the building also enables visitors to view a legendary collection of folk art in its original context. While Brown's collection of art is not part of this nomination, the context that the historic building provides for the collection is definitely one of its most significant features. Lee Kogan, the director of the Folk Art Institute at the American Folk Art Museum in New York City has said about the RBSC

... [it is] a unique setting to study outstanding original art works in context. The opportunity to examine original works by trained artists, Roger Brown and the Chicago Imagists, along with the art of self-taught artists they appreciated and in some cases discovered, is extraordinary for researchers, scholars, and the public.⁶⁸

The RBSC is also significant in the City of Chicago because it provides an unusually complete view into the cultural, architectural, artistic, and social conditions of Chicago in the 1970s through the 1990s, a time of exceptional creative fertility in the city. Sidney Lawrence, a curator and former head of public affairs at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C. says

This collection not only expands understanding of Mr. Brown's work but also opens a window into an aspect of Chicago's esthetic heritage, apart from its rich architecture, that too few people know about. ... The Study Center gives you "the real thing," a Chicago storefront studio where a flesh-and-blood individual, at the center of a generation where this interest was strongest, lived and worked. ... The Roger Brown Study Center is an "Artist's Studio Museum" unlike any other, in the U.S. or abroad.⁶⁹

This kind of authentic historical experience is increasingly rare, and there are no other such resources in Illinois available in connection with Brown, nor any part of the Imagist movement. The property at 1926 N. Halsted Street is the single best existing building to represent the legacies of both Brown and Chicago Imagism. None of the homes and studios of other Imagist artists have or likely will be preserved. The home of Ray Yoshida, Brown's teacher and mentor, was an important model for Brown as he planned his living space around his art collection. Yoshida died in 2009, and there are no plans to preserve his home and collection, which has already been partially dismantled for exhibitions at the Honolulu Academy of the Arts and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Henry Darger is another important Chicago artist who created his life's work in his apartment on the city's North Side. But his home and studio have not survived; Darger's studio and living space were demolished in a building renovation, and only a few original architectural features were incorporated into a permanent display of his belongings at the Intuit Center for Intuitive and Outsider Art in Chicago. The Hyde Park Art

⁶⁵ Letter from Brown to Lisa Stone, January 23, 1997.

⁶⁷ James Rondeau, foreword to *Middle of the Road: A Suburban Affect* (Chicago: The School of the Art Institute, 2002), 7.

⁶⁸ Letter to Tony Jones, former president of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, April 15, 2001.

⁶⁹ Letter to Tony Jones, former president of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, April 20, 2001.

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Center was the location of many important episodes in the history of Imagism, and to this day it remains true to the mission that it had in 1968 of showing cutting-edge contemporary artwork. However, it is now located in a facility completed in 2006 that is several blocks from its former home. The HPAC occupied a variety of sites around the Hyde Park neighborhood before finally settling into its current permanent home and none of its past locations have retained enough integrity to be useful built resources for the study of Chicago Imagism.

However, 1926 N. Halsted's connection to Imagism is only one aspect of its history that makes it significant. Brown himself was clearly an especially significant artist in his own right, beyond his affiliation with the Imagists. With the possible exception of Ed Paschke and Jim Nutt, scholarly and popular interest in Brown's work has surpassed that of the other Imagist artists, and, in 1980, art critic Dennis Adrian described Brown as being "in the forefront of one of the most absorbing and impressive directions of American art."⁷⁰ While artwork by most of the Imagists has been collected, displayed and discussed consistently around the world, the number of traveling solo exhibitions and major museum collections that include Brown is exceptional. Furthermore, his popularity outside of the art world is greater, in large part because of his highly visible public art projects and publication of his artwork in books and the national media.

Many artists treat their homes and studios as private places to work alone and live with their families. Brown, like Yoshida, thought of his home as a special place for the collection and display of artwork that was inspiring to him and other artists: the "Artists' Museum of Chicago." It was this attitude towards 1926 N. Halsted Street as a distinctive place for creative thought that led Brown to have the School of the Art Institute of Chicago be the permanent custodian of his building and collection, which in turn meant that it has been uniquely well preserved. No other homes and studios of Imagist artists anywhere, even those less individually significant than Brown, have been preserved like this property. Paschke died in 2004, with neither his home nor studio marked for public appreciation, and Nutt still maintains a very private life and practice in suburban Winnetka, Illinois.

Brown did own and temporarily occupy two other properties: a home and studio designed by Veronda in New Buffalo, Michigan, and one designed by Stanley Tigerman in La Conchita, California, which is where Brown spent the last two years of his life. He created significant artworks at these other locations, and was just as inspired by their individual environments as he was by that on Halsted Street - while in New Buffalo he became fascinated by the dune landscape surrounding Lake Michigan and while in La Conchita with the arid California scenery. However, 1926 N. Halsted was his first home and studio, the place where he spent the vast majority of his adult life, and where he produced most of his artwork. The vernacular urban architecture of Lincoln Park permeated Brown's artwork for his entire career; even when he rendered scenes not intended to take place in Chicago, brick storefront buildings like that at 1926 N. Halsted Street consistently appeared. The property in California is now in private hands and has undergone some modifications, including the removal of Brown's art collection. Brown donated the New Buffalo property to SAIC in 1995, and it is now maintained as a study center and artist's retreat. 1926 N. Halsted is the only one of Brown's three properties in the State of Illinois, so neither of the other homes can compete with its significance in the state, and city, that was the crucible of Chicago Imagism.

The building at 1926 N. Halsted Street is therefore the single remaining building closely associated with Roger Brown and the Imagist movement in their home city of Chicago. It provides the best and most effective way for the public to remember Chicago's legacy in the history of twentieth-century American art, a legacy that is rich, rare, and exciting.

Similar Landmarks in Chicago & Elsewhere

Brown and the Imagists were just one episode in Chicago's important history of producing innovative visual art, and some buildings relating to that broader history have become recognized local landmarks. Some locations where art has been created and displayed that are now City of Chicago landmarks include Tree Studios, Three Arts Club, and the Fine Arts Building. Lorado Taft's Midway Studio in Hyde Park was one of the first entries on the National Register of Historic Places when it was created in 1966, only sixty years after Taft first occupied the building. It is also a National Historic Landmark and a Chicago Landmark. Taft was an important twentieth-century sculptor and, like Brown, is known for his public commissions, which in Chicago include the "Fountain of Time" sculpture on the Midway Plaisance and the "Fountain of the Great Lakes" outside the Art Institute of Chicago, along with numerous other works around the country. However, there are no artist homes or studios in Chicago that were in use later than the early-twentieth century that are local or

⁷⁰ Dennis Adrian, "Roger Brown and the Chicago Context: An Appreciation" in *Sight Out of Mind: Essays and Criticism on Art* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research Press, 1985), 52.

Roger Brown Home and Studio

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statewide landmarks. Since Chicago's contribution to mid-twentieth-century art has been firmly established, 1926 N. Halsted Street is a singular site for the study and appreciation of this city's art history.

Elsewhere in the country, the homes and studios of mid-twentieth-century artists are popular and important sites that are recognized by the National Register for Historic Places and local landmark ordinances. In 2000, the National Trust for Historic Preservation chose twenty properties to participate in the pilot program of the Historic Artists' Homes and Studios (HAHS) program, many of which belong to twentieth-century artists. The program was intended to "help American art-related sites to preserve, document, and interpret their collections and buildings."⁷¹ The RBSC has been a member of the HAHS program since its inception, and the program has grown to a consortium of thirty sites where important American art was created, including Frederick Church's Olana, and Cedar Grove, the Thomas Cole National Historic Site. Twentieth-century art sites in the program include Grant Wood's 5 Turner Alley, the Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center, and Donald Judd's 101 Spring Street. All of the properties in the HAHS program are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, and most are listed. The inclusion of Brown's home and studio in this program was a clear validation by the National Trust for Historic Preservation of Brown's significance to American art history, and of the importance of preserving the RBSC as a museum and archive for the study of his exceptional artistic legacy. The exceptional physical integrity and historical significance of the property at 1926 N. Halsted Street earned its place in this prestigious program, and these are the same features that qualify it for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

⁷¹ <http://www.saic.edu/webspaces/rogerbrown/brown/rbhc/historic.html>

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IMAGES



Image 1. Brown's sketch of the backyard garden, c. 1993

Roger Brown Home and Studio

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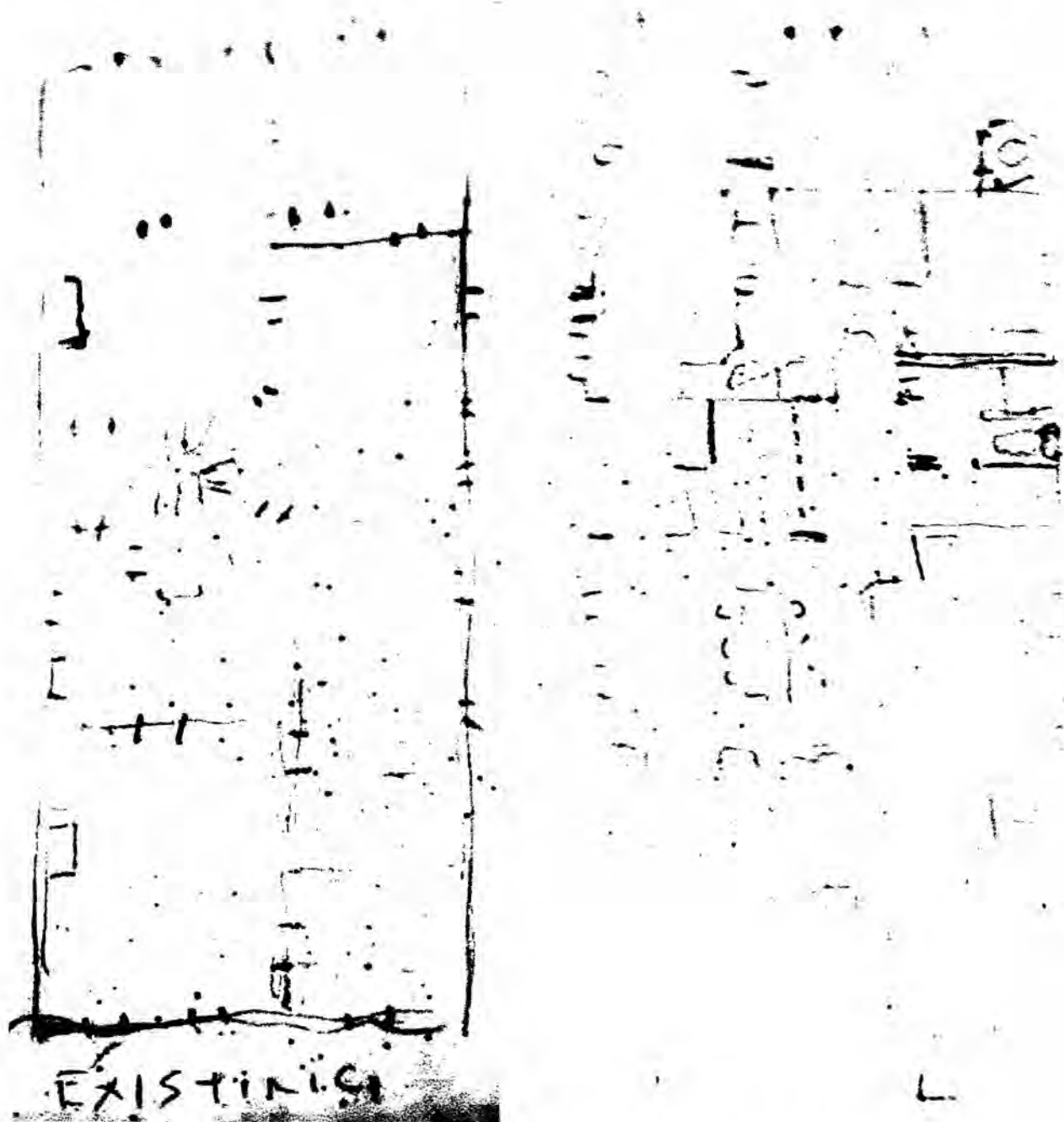


Image 2. Brown's sketches of former 2nd floor plan (left) and his plan for the remodel (right)

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Image 3. Brown in front of the blocked main entrance to 1926 N. Halsted Street

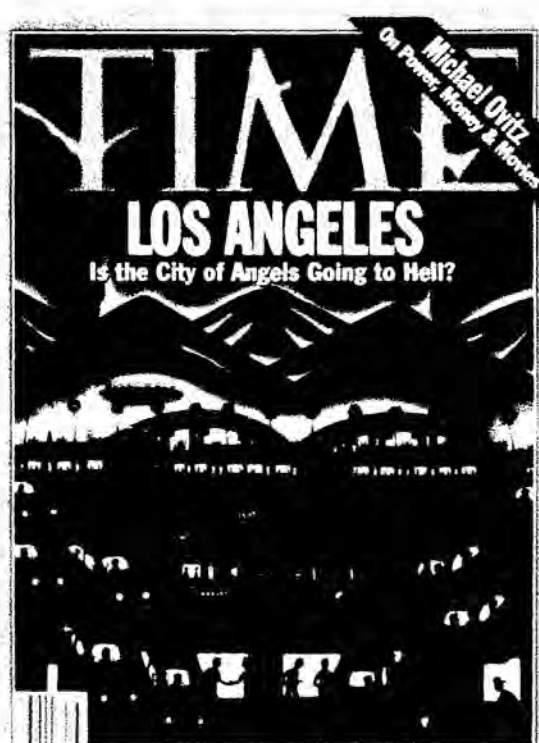
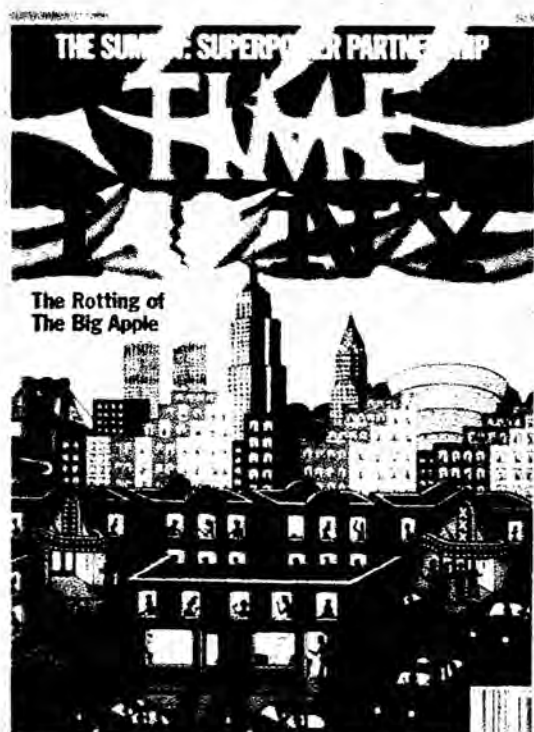


Image 4. Brown's *Time* magazine covers, 1990 & 1993

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Image 5. Roger Brown, "Silly Savages (We Will Sell No Painting Before It's Dry)," 1983, oil on canvas, 48" x 72"



Image 6. Roger Brown, "The Young and Self-Conscious," 1991, oil on canvas, 48" x 72"

Roger Brown Home and Studio
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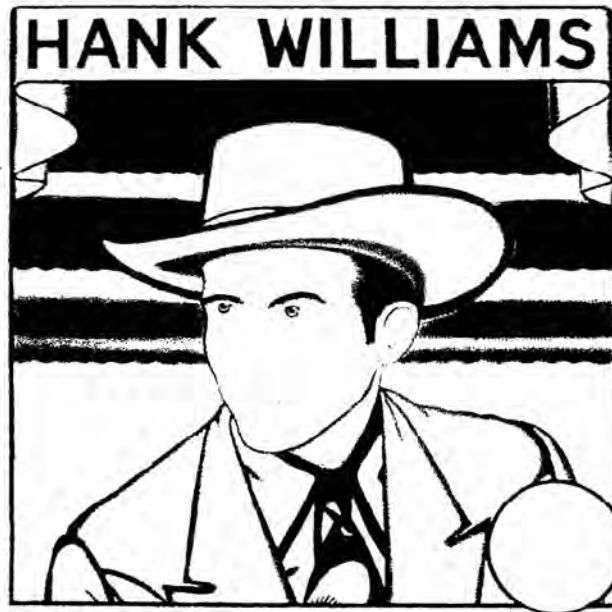


Image 7. Roger Brown, "Hank Williams, Honky Tonk Man," 1991, lithograph, 40" x 40"



Image 8. Roger Brown, "Pasadena Garden Residence," 1971, oil on canvas, 48" x 60"

Roger Brown Home and Studio

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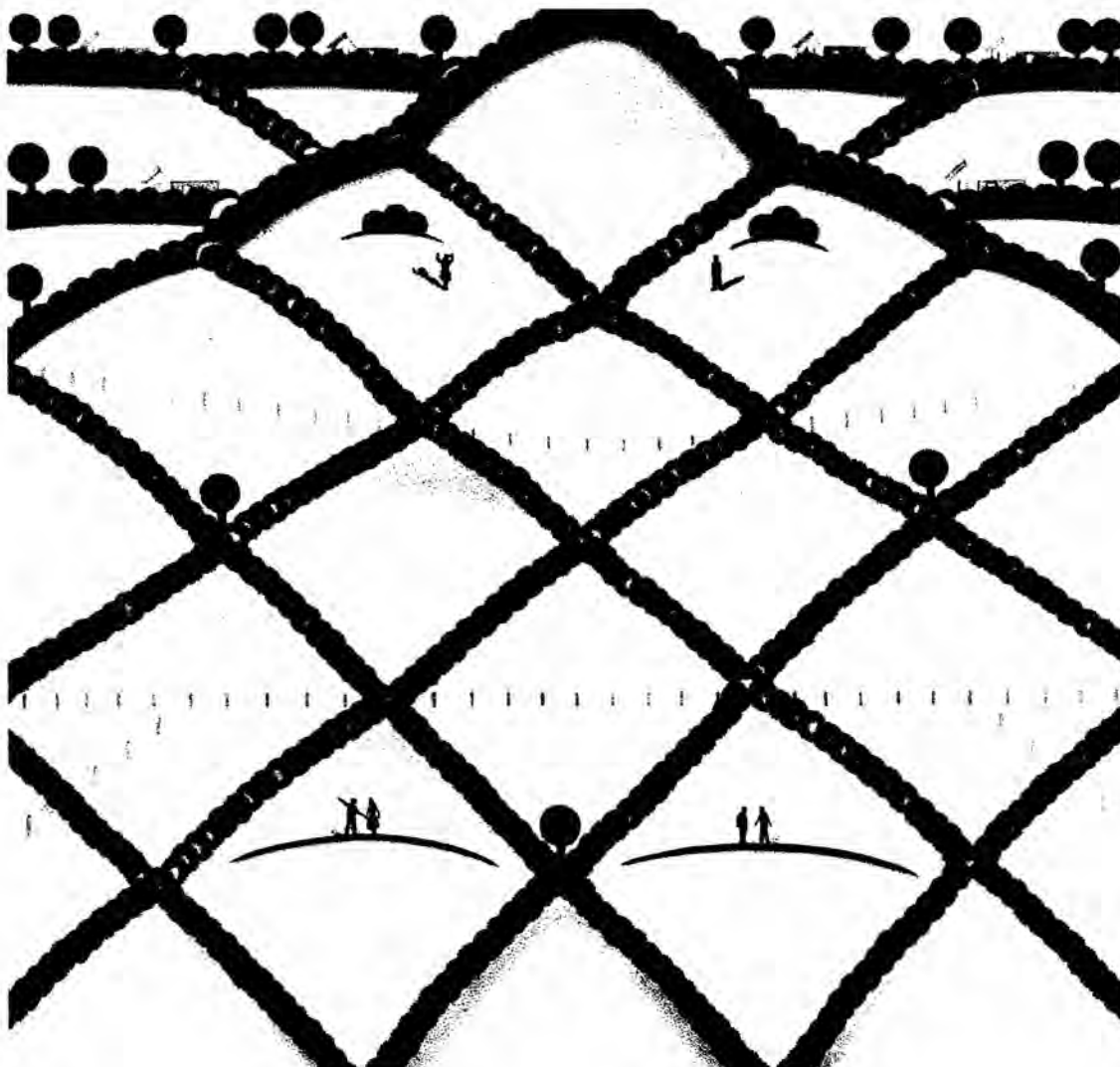


Image 9 Roger Brown, "Quilted Landscape," 1973, oil on canvas, 60.5" x 60.25." Collection of Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam, the Netherlands.



Image 10. Brown's living room (left) and a portion of Andre Breton's study re-created in an exhibit at the Centre Pompidou (right), both including a mixture of African and contemporary art

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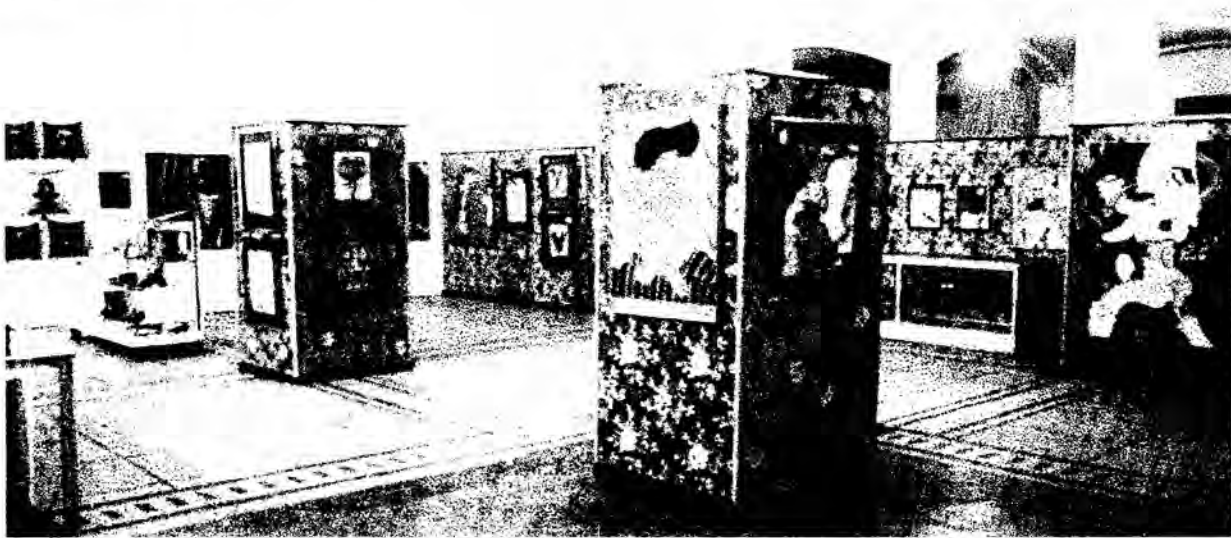


Image 11. Installation of *Now! Hairy Who Makes You Smell Good*, Hyde Park Art Center, 1968

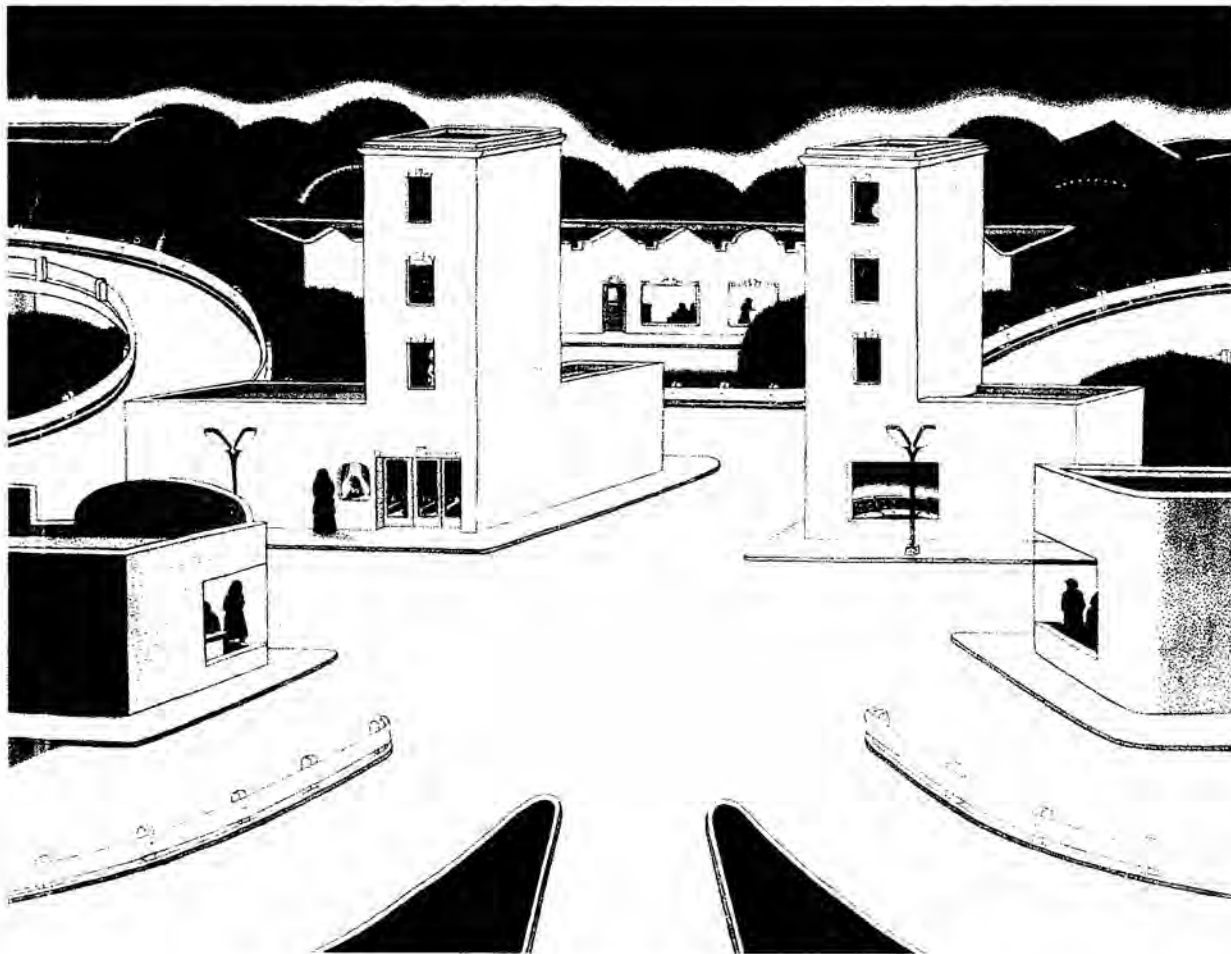


Image 12. Roger Brown, "Central City," 1970, oil on canvas, 49.5" x 62"

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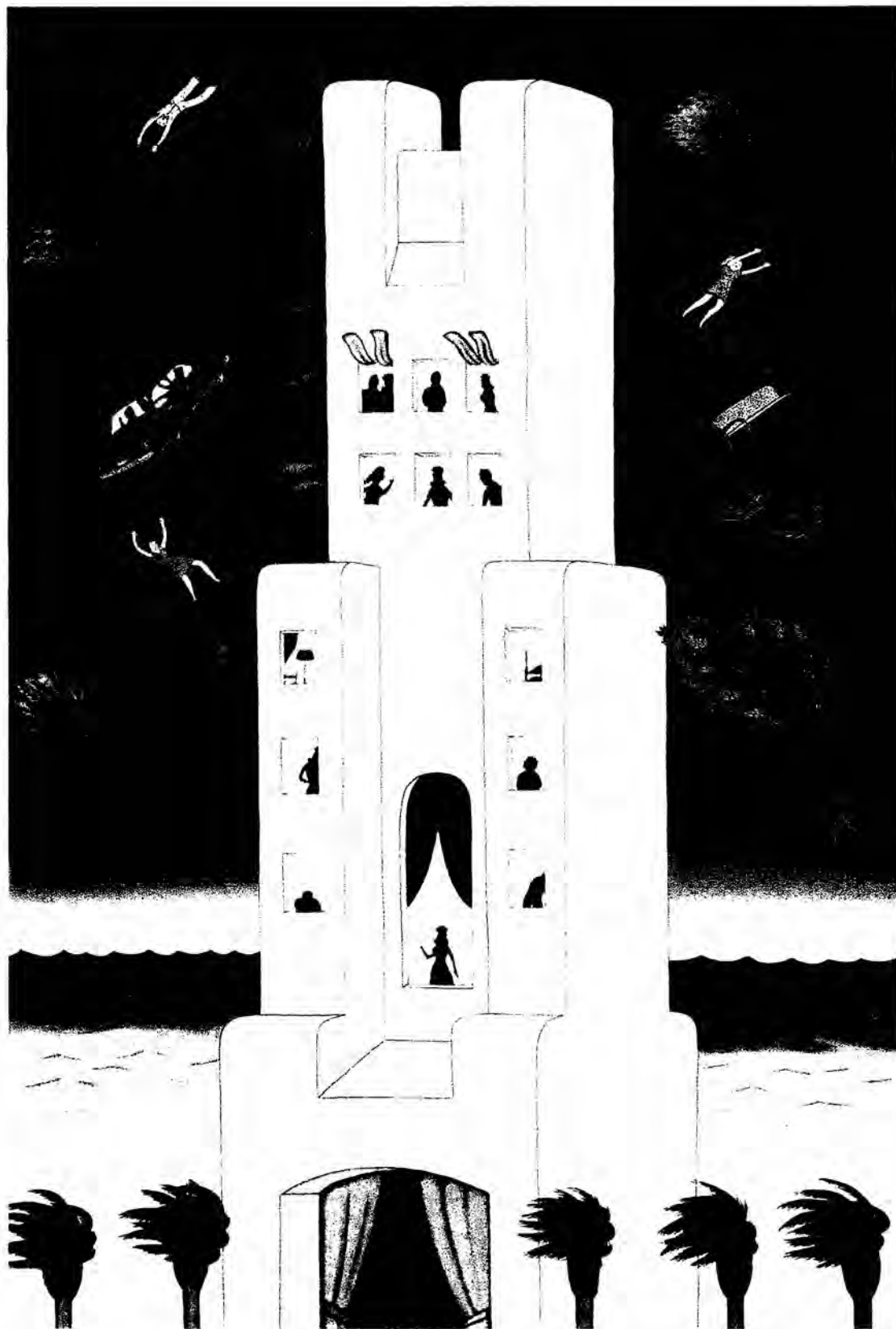


Image 13. Roger Brown, "Tropical Storm," 1972, oil on canvas, 72.5" x 48.5"

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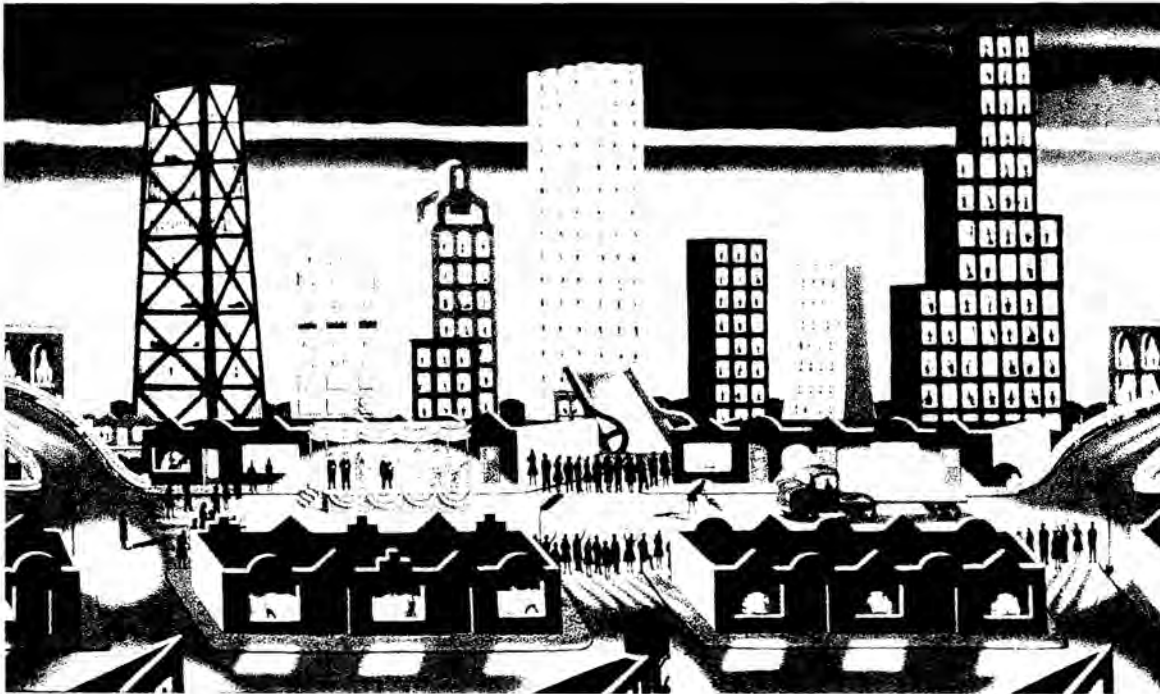


Image 14. Roger Brown, "The Entry of Christ into Chicago in 1976," 1976, oil on canvas, 72" x 120." Collection of the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

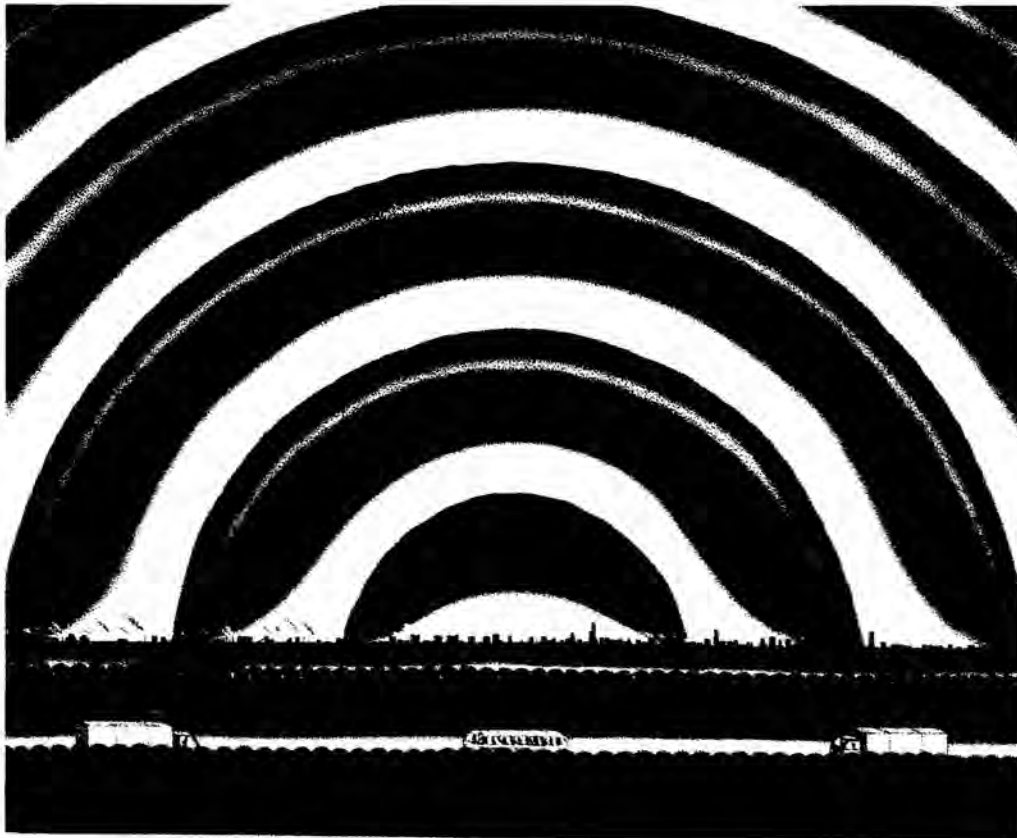


Image 15. "Lake Effect," 1980, oil on canvas, 72" x 72"

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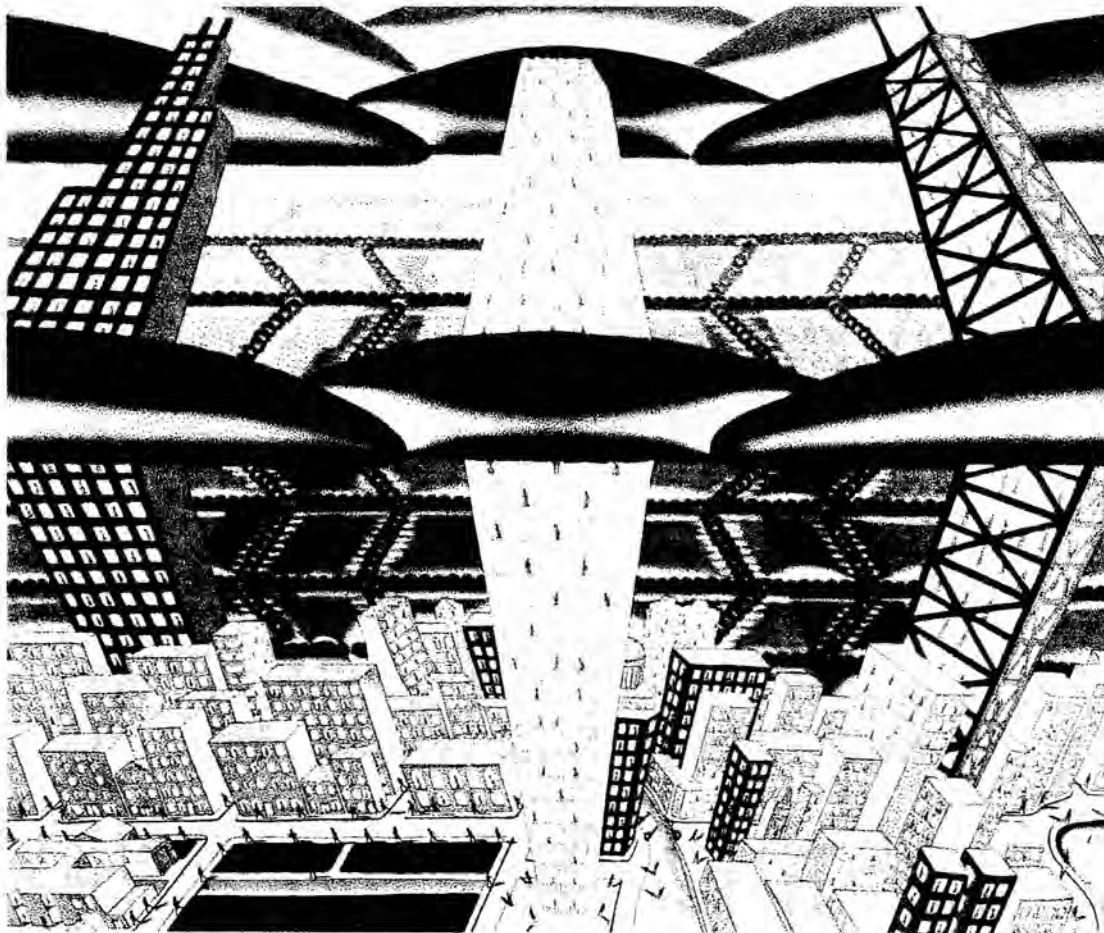


Image 16. Roger Brown, "Land of Lincoln," 1978, oil on canvas, 71.5" x 84"



Image 17. Roger Brown, "The Arts and Sciences of the Ancient World. The Flight of Daedalus and Icarus" at 120 North LaSalle Street, Chicago

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Image 18. Roger Brown, "Hull House, Cook County, Howard Brown: A Tradition of Helping" at the Howard Brown Health Center, Chicago

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Appendix 1: Roger Brown Exhibition History

Solo shows

2009

Roger Brown, Art Works: Chicago A Progressive Corporate Exhibition of Chicago Artists, Metropolitan Capital Bank, Chicago

2008

Roger Brown: The American Landscape, DC Moore Gallery, New York

2007-2008

Roger Brown: Southern Exposure, Jule Collins Smith Museum, Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama, traveling to The Katzen Arts Center at American University, Washington, DC, and The Ogden Museum of Southern Art, University of New Orleans

2006

Roger Brown: The Last Paintings, Russell Bowman Art Advisory, Chicago, IL

Roger Brown: From the Collection of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Federal Reserve Board, Washington, D.C.

2005

Roger Brown: From the Collection of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Federal Reserve Board, Washington, D.C.

2004

Roger Brown: A Different Dimension, Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, AL, and The Chicago Cultural Center

Roger Brown: Selections from the Collection of The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Brauer Museum of Art, Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, IN

2001

Roger Brown: Great Lakes Selections from the Collection of The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Brauer Museum of Art, Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, IN

1999

Roger Brown Paintings from the SAIC Collection, The University Club of Chicago

1998

Roger Brown and Friends in the Nineties, Van Every/Smith Galleries, Davidson College, Davidson, NC, traveling to the University of Alabama-Birmingham

1997, 1996, 1994, 1991, 1988, 1986, 1979, 1977, 1976, 1974, 1973, 1971

Phyllis Kind Gallery, Chicago

1996

Roger Brown: California Dreamin', Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum, Santa Barbara, CA

1995, 1992, 1989, 1987, 1985, 1984, 1982, 1981, 1979, 1977, 1975

Phyllis Kind Gallery, New York

1990, 1988

Arthur Roger Gallery, New Orleans, LA

1990

David Heath Gallery, Atlanta, GA

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1987-1988

Roger Brown, a retrospective organized by the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; traveling to: La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, Lowe Art Museum, University of Miami, Des Moines Art Center, IA

1987

Fendrick Gallery, Washington, D.C.

1986

John Berggruen Gallery, San Francisco, CA

1985

Texas Gallery, Houston, TX

1983

Asher/Faure Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

1981

Mayor Gallery, London

1980-1981

Roger Brown, Montgomery Museum of Fine Art, Montgomery, AL, traveling to: Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago

1974

Galerie Darthea Speyer, Paris

Peale House, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Philadelphia, PA

Group shows

2003

Splat Boom Pow! The Influence of Comics in Contemporary Art, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, TX, traveling to: Wexner Center for the Arts at Ohio State University, Henie Onstad Kunstsenter, Norway

2002

Surf Culture: the Art History of Surfing, Laguna Art Museum, Laguna Beach, CA, traveling to The Contemporary Museum of Honolulu, Contemporary Art Center of Virginia, Virginia Beach, VA, San Jose Museum of Art, CA

Art in the 'Toon Age, Kresge Art Museum, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI

2001

Jellies: Living Art, Monterey Bay Aquarium, 2001 - 2006

Steel and Flesh, Indiana University Northwest INU Gallery for Contemporary Art, Gary, IN

Roger Brown: Great Lakes Selections from the Collection of The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Brauer Museum of Art, Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, IN

SUBLIMATED CONFLICTS: Contentious Categories within the Roger Brown Collection, 1926 Exhibition Studies Space, Chicago, IL

2000

Bizarro World!, Cornell Fine Arts Museum / Rollins College, Winter Park, FL

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1999-2000

Jumpin' Backflash: Original Imagist Artwork, 1966-1969, Northern Indiana Arts Association, Munster, IN, traveling to the Chicago Cultural Center, Chicago, IL

1998

Roger Brown and Friends in the Nineties, Van Every/Smith Galleries, Davidson College, Davidson, NC, traveling to the University of Alabama-Birmingham

1997

30 Hairy: A Celebration of 30 years of Contemporary Art Brought to you by Phyllis Kind, Phyllis Kind Gallery, Chicago, IL

Chicago Imagists, Selby Gallery, Ringling School of Art and Design, Sarasota, FL

Grins, Millard Sheets Gallery, Pomona, CA

1996

Art in Chicago: 1945-1995, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, IL

1995

Allegorical Landscape, Suburban Fine Arts Center, Highland Park, IL

Alabama Impact: Contemporary Artists with Alabama Ties, Mobile Museum of Art

American Art Today: Night Paintings, Florida International University

Phyllis Kind Gallery Revisited, The Foster Gallery, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

1993-1994

Chicago Art Invitational, Union League Club, Chicago

1992-1993

Parallel Visions: Modern Artists and Outsider Art, The Los Angeles County Museum of Art, traveling to: Kunsthalle Basel, Switzerland, Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid, Setagaya, Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan

1990-1991

Word As Image/American Art 1960-1990, Milwaukee Art Museum, traveling to: Oklahoma City Art Museum, Contemporary Arts Museum, Houston, Texas

1990

Home Again, Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, GA

1989

50th Anniversary Exhibition, Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago, IL

Chicago Painters in Print: Brown, Paschke, Hull, Lostutter, Pasin-Sloan, Bramson, Wirsum, Landfall Press, Chicago

1989-1991

A Different War, Vietnam in Art, Whatcom Museum of History and Art, Bellingham, WA

1989-1990

Death, Sate of Illinois Art Gallery, Chicago and traveling exhibition

1988

Contemporary Landscape: Roger Brown, Louisa Chase, David Deutsch, Ellen Galen, and Robert Lobe, Rathbone Gallery, Junior College of Albany, Albany, NY

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1987-1988

Comic Iconoclasm, Institute of Contemporary Art, London, England and traveling exhibition

1987

The Chicago Imagist Print, The David and Alfred Smart Gallery, The University of Chicago

Utopian Visions, Organized by the Museum of Modern Art, Art Advisory Service for American Express Company, New York

Of New Account: The Chicago Imagists, School of Art Gallery, Bowling Green University, Ohio

Surfaces: Two Decades of Painting in Chicago Seventies & Eighties, Terra Museum of American Art, Chicago

Contemporary American Stage Design, Milwaukee Art Museum, Milwaukee, WI

Urgent Messages, Chicago Public Library Cultural Center

1986

Second Sight: Biennial IV, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA

Seventy-Fifth American Exhibition, The Art Institute of Chicago

1985-1986

Correspondences: New York Art Now, Laforet Museum, Tokyo, Japan, and traveling to: Tochigi Prefectural Museum of Fine Art, Tochigi, Japan and Tasaki Hall, Espace Media, Kobe, Japan

1985

Sources of Light: Contemporary American Luminism, Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle

States of War: New European and American Painting, Seattle Art Museum, Seattle, WA

The Political Landscape, Robeson Center Gallery, Rutgers University, Newark, NJ

1984-1985

Paradise Lost/Paradise Regained: American Visions of the New Decade, American Pavilion, Venice Biennale and traveling exhibition throughout Europe (exhibition curated by the New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York)

1977, 1974, 1971, 1969 *Chicago and Vicinity Show*, the Art Institute of Chicago

1969

Don Baum Sez Chicago Needs Famous Artists, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago

1970, 1969, 1968 *The False Image*, Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago

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Appendix 2: Selected Public Collections Including Roger Brown Artwork

120 N. LaSalle / Ahmanson Commercial Development Co., Chicago
Akron Museum of Art, Akron, Ohio
American Telephone and Telegraph, NY
Asheville Museum of Art, NC
The Art Center, South Bend, IN
The Art Institute of Chicago
Atlantic Richfield Company, San Francisco
BankOne, Chicago
Bank of America, Wilmington, DE
Ball State University, Muncie, IN
Birmingham Art Museum, Alabama
Blue Cross of Southern California
Brauer Museum of Art, Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, IN
Butler Museum of American Art, Youngstown, OH
Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University
Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University, NY
Cedar Rapids Museum of Art
Chicago History Museum
Cole Taylor Bank, Chicago
Columbus Museum of Art, Columbus, GA
Continental Bank, Amsterdam
Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, Dallas, TX
David and Alfred Smart Museum, The University of Chicago
Dayton Art Institute
Elmhurst College, Elmhurst, IL
Equitable Corporation, NBC Tower, Chicago
Federal Reserve Bank, Birmingham, AL
Federal Reserve Board, Washington, D.C.
Foley Square Federal Building, NY
Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art, The University of Oklahoma
Harold Washington Public Library, Chicago, IL
High Museum of Art, Atlanta
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.
Howard Brown Health Center, Chicago
Indianapolis Museum of Art, IN
J.P. Morgan Chase Art Collection, New York
Los Angeles County Museum
McCormick Place Convention Center, Chicago
Madison Museum of Contemporary Art, Madison, WI
Main Bank, Chicago
Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY
Memphis Brooks Museum of Art
Midwest Museum of American Art, Elkhart, IN
Milwaukee Art Museum, WI
Mobile Museum of Art, AL
Montgomery Museum of Art, AL
Museum Boymans, Rotterdam
Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston
Museum of Modern Art, NY
Museum Moderner Kunst / Museum des 20. Jahrhunderts, Vienna
Nelson Atkins Museum of Fine Art, Kansas City, MO
North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh

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Northern Illinois University Student Association Art Collection, DeKalb, IL
Northern Trust Bank, Chicago
Ogden Museum of Southern Art, University of New Orleans, Louisiana
Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia
Phoenix Art Museum
Playboy Collection, Chicago
Portland Museum of Art
Prudential Insurance Company, NJ
Rockford Art Museum, IL
Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh
Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC
The State of Illinois Collection, Thompson Center, Chicago
United Bank of Denver, CO
Union League Club, Chicago
University Club of Chicago
Vassar College, Francis Lerner Loeb Center for the Arts
Victory Gardens Theatre, Chicago
Weatherspoon Gallery, University of North Carolina, Greensboro
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York
William Rainey Harper College, Palatine, IL

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

N/A

Roger Brown Home and Studio

Name of Property

Cook County, Illinois

County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Adrian, Dennis (introduction). *Chicago: Some Other Traditions*. Madison, Wisconsin: Madison Art Center, 1983.

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Yood, James (essay). *Jumpin' Backflash: Original Imagist Artwork, 1966 - 1969*. Munster, Indiana: Northern Indiana Arts Association, 1999.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
☐ previously listed in the National Register
☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
☐ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☐ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☐ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other

Name of repository: **Roger Brown Study Collection archives
1926 N. Halsted Street, Chicago**

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

N/A

Cook County, Illinois
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Acreage of Property Less than one acre
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	16	447810	4640600
	Zone	Easting	Northing

3. Zone Easting Northing

2	Zone	Easting	Northing
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4 Zone Easting Northing

The property is located on Lot 11, Block 8 in subdivision of Block 5 in Sheffield's Addition to Chicago, in Section 32, Township 40 North, Range 14 East of the Third Principal Meridian in Cook County, Illinois. The property is bounded to the east by North Halsted Street and to the west by a public alley. The physical address of the property is 1926 North Halsted St., Chicago, Illinois, 60614.

The boundary chosen conforms to the original and legal property lines for 1926 North Halsted Street, Chicago, Illinois.

name/title	Susannah Ribstein		
organization		date	9/21/2010
street & number	1657 W. 33 rd St.	telephone	708-207-6590
city or town	Chicago	state	IL zip code 60609
e-mail	susannahbet@gmail.com		

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
 - **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Roger Brown Home and Studio

Name of Property

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Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Roger Brown Home and Studio

City or Vicinity: Chicago

County: Cook

State: Illinois

Photographer: Tianyi Jiang and Lisa Stone

Date Photographed: July, 2010.

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

Photo #1 (IL_Cook County_Brown House_0001.tif)

East facade with Halsted Street surroundings, camera facing west

Photo #2 (IL_Cook County_Brown House_0002.tif)

East facade, camera facing west

Photo #3 (IL_Cook County_Brown House_0003.tif)

East and north facades showing advertisement on north facade, camera facing southwest

Photo #4 (IL_Cook County_Brown House_0004.tif)

North facade detail showing advertisement, camera facing southwest

Photo #5 (IL_Cook County_Brown House_0005.tif)

North facade, camera facing southwest

Photo #6 (IL_Cook County_Brown House_0006.tif)

North facade, camera facing southeast

Photo #7 (IL_Cook County_Brown House_0007.tif)

South facade, camera facing northeast

Photo #8 (IL_Cook County_Brown House_0008.tif)

South facade, camera facing northwest

Photo #9 (IL_Cook County_Brown House_0009.tif)

West facade, camera facing east

Photo #10 (IL_Cook County_Brown House_0010.tif)

Backyard garden and garage, camera facing west

Photo #11 (IL_Cook County_Brown House_0011.tif)

First floor, studio/gallery, camera facing east

Photo #12 (IL_Cook County_Brown House_0012.tif)

First floor, rear workshop, camera facing east

Photo #13 (IL_Cook County_Brown House_0013.tif)

Central stairway, camera facing up and to the north

Photo #14 (IL_Cook County_Brown House_0014.tif)

Second floor, central stairway top landing, camera facing northeast

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Photo #15 (IL_Cook County_Brown House_0015.tif)
Second floor, living room, camera facing west

Photo #16 (IL_Cook County_Brown House_0016.tif)
Second floor, kitchen, camera facing west

Photo #17 (IL_Cook County_Brown House_0017.tif)
Second floor, den, camera facing west

Photo #18 (IL_Cook County_Brown House_0018.tif)
Second floor, den, fireplace detail, camera facing north

Photo #19 (IL_Cook County_Brown House_0019.tif)
Second floor, hallway north of central stairway, camera facing west

Photo #20 (IL_Cook County_Brown House_0020.tif)
Second floor, guest bedroom, camera facing northeast

Photo #21 (IL_Cook County_Brown House_0021.tif)
Second floor, bathroom, camera facing northeast

Photo #22 (IL_Cook County_Brown House_0022.tif)
Second floor, master bedroom, camera facing northwest

Photo #23 (IL_Cook County_Brown House_0023.tif)
Second floor, foyer, camera facing northwest

Photo #24 (IL_Cook County_Brown House_0024.tif)
Second floor, north stairway hall, camera facing west

Photo #25 (IL_Cook County_Brown House_0025.tif)
First floor, north entry vestibule, camera facing up and to the west

Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Roger Brown Study Collection (Lisa Stone, curator)
street & number 1926 N. Halsted St. telephone 773-929-2452
city or town Chicago state IL zip code 60614

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

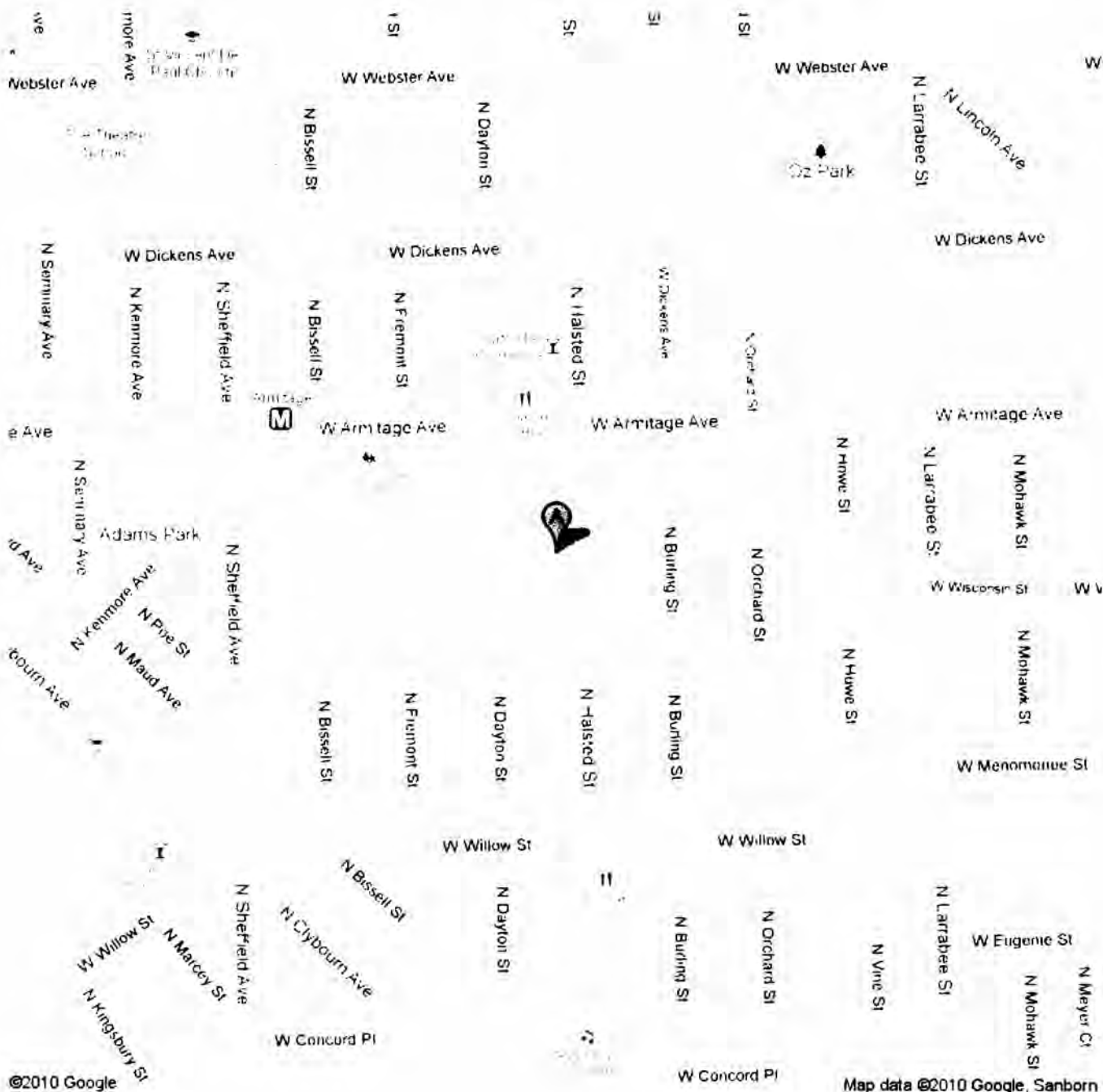
Google maps

Address **1926 N Halsted St**
Chicago, IL 60614
Cook Co.

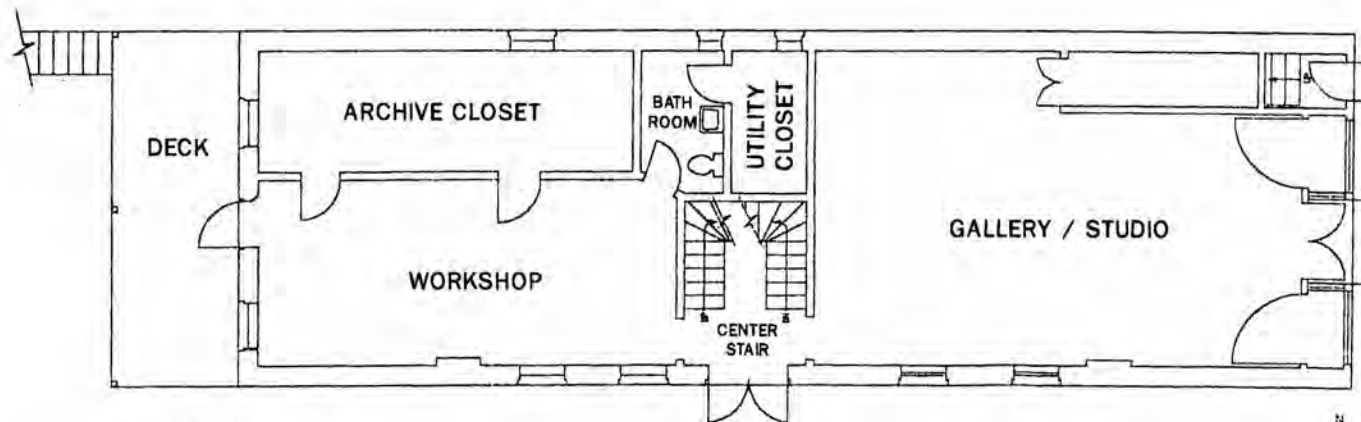
Roger Brown's Home and Studio

Get Google Maps on your phone

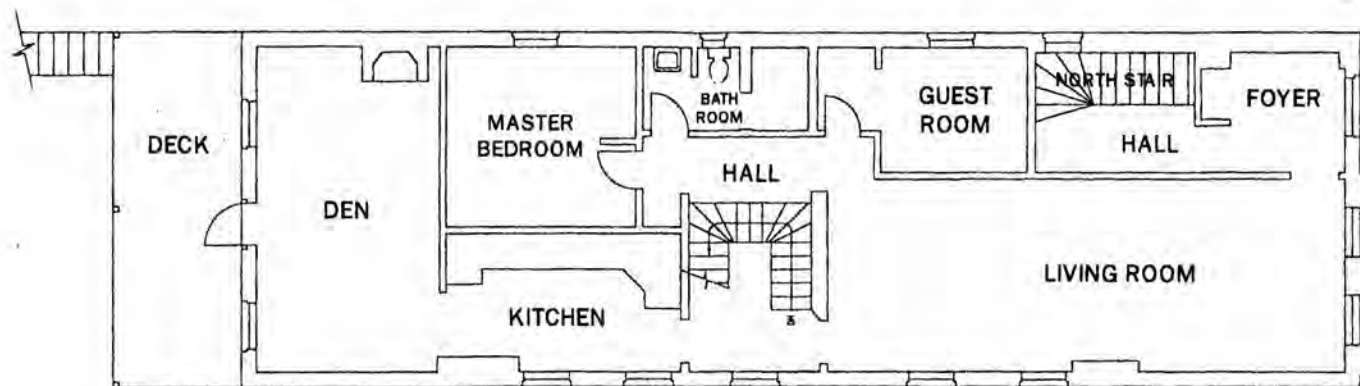
Text the word "GMAPS" to 466453



Roger Brown Home and Studio
Cape Cod, 1992



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

41 Upper Pike Creek Rd,
Newark vicinity, 11000036,
LISTED, 2/22/11

ILLINOIS, COLES COUNTY,
Roytek, Richard, House,
3420 Richmond Ave,
Mattoon, 11000030,
LISTED, 2/22/11

ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,
Brown, Roger, Home and Studio,
1926 N Halsted St,
Chicago, 11000029,
LISTED, 2/22/11

ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,
Greeley, Dr. Paul W. and Eunice, House,
545 Oak St,
Winnetka, 11000048,
LISTED, 2/25/11

ILLINOIS, COOK COUNTY,
Schurz, Carl, High School,
3601 N Milwaukee Ave,
Chicago, 11000031,
LISTED, 2/22/11

MASSACHUSETTS, WORCESTER COUNTY,
Athol High School,
494 School St,
Athol, 11000022,
LISTED, 2/18/11

MASSACHUSETTS, WORCESTER COUNTY,
South Union School,
21 Highland St,
Southborough, 11000021,
LISTED, 2/18/11

MASSACHUSETTS, WORCESTER COUNTY,
Thule--Plummer Buildings,
180 and 184 Main St,
Worcester, 11000019,
LISTED, 2/18/11